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THE CHARM SCHOOL

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

ALICE DUER MILLER

AND

ROBERT MILTON

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Made and Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

CHARACTERS

PETER BEVANS,
A motor dealer with ideas which

DAVID MACKENZIE,
A law student, considers unpractical, though

GEORGE BOYD,
An expert accountant, is willing to co-operate, and also

JIM BRADBURY AND TIM BRADBURY,
Who toil not and have never seriously considered spinning.

HOMER JOHNS
Is the guardian of

ELISE CHALLONER,
The head of the senior class at a school presided over by

MISS HAYES,
Who is loved and feared by all who know her, including her secretary,

MISS CURTIS,
Who is always trying to think well of the senior class, consisting of

SALLY BOYD,
Who is GEORGE'S *sister, and*

ETHEL
ALIX
DONNET
MARY
MURIEL
MADGE
DOROTHY
LILLIAN
CELIA
EDNA

THE CHARM SCHOOL

Produced on December 23, 1920, at the Comedy Theatre, London, with the following cast of characters :—

PETER BEVANS	*Mr. Owen Nares*
DAVID MACKENZIE	*Mr. David Miller*
GEORGE BOYD	*Mr. Kenneth Kent*
JIM BRADBURY	*Mr. Hugh Dempster*
TIM BRADBURY	*Mr. Ronald Hammond*
HOMER JOHNS	*Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn*
ELISE CHALLONER	*Miss Meggie Albanesi*
MISS HAYES	*Miss Lena Halliday*
MISS CURTIS	*Miss Sydney Fairbrother*
SALLY BOYD	*Miss Margery Meadows*
ETHEL	*Miss Maureen Dillon*
ALIX	*Miss Ethel Fisher*
DONNET	*Miss Donnet Paynter*
MARY	*Miss Mary Ewin*
MURIEL	*Miss Kathleen Cope*
MADGE	*Miss Margaret Elston*
DOROTHY	*Miss Dorothy Elston*
LILLIAN	*Miss Lalla Cragg*
CELIA	*Miss Celia Elston*
EDNA	*Miss Edna Gordon*

SCENES

ACT I

Evening

The flat on the top floor of an old-fashioned Bloomsbury house.

ACT II

The Main Hall of the School.

SCENE I.—Noon.

SCENE II.—About two weeks later.

Between scenes one and two the curtain should be lowered two minutes to indicate a lapse of time.

ACT III

SCENE I.—Midnight, on the road.

SCENE II.—The next morning at the school.

NOTE.—Scene I of Act III may be omitted, as the play is complete without it.

THE CHARM SCHOOL

ACT I

SCENE.—*Shabby sitting-room on top floor of an old-fashioned Bloomsbury house, turned into flats. The doors and windows are high and the tops rounded. The walls are painted a light tan colour. Down* L. *is the door leading to the hall—swings outward. General entrance from outside. An oblique piece joins the door piece to a flat running on stage, and contains large double doors that swing up stage into the kitchen. A blank piece joins the on-stage edge of the above flat, runs up stage. The back flat proper joins the up-stage edge of this piece and runs across to* R. *side. There are two double windows in the back flat. On* R. *joining the return a blank piece runs up stage straight, joins a fireplace piece, set obliquely, and a blank piece joins this to the back flat. A narrow piece about thirty inches deep runs from up-stage edge of fireplace straight across to the small flat piece at* L.C., *containing the double doors to the kitchen, giving an effect of an altered room or alcove. Two posts support them, having the effect of supporting the partition of narrow piece. Back of the double doors is the kitchen, with the dumb waiter, in the backing, which swings down stage and on. The practical dumb-waiter is directly back of the double door. A laundry basket is on the stage* L.C. *A drop representing house-tops backs the windows. Interior backing for door* L. *A plan of the scene will be found at the end of the play.*

TIME.—*Late afternoon of a day in Spring.*

(*Discovered:* DAVID *is sitting on the big easy chair, smoking his pipe and reading law. As he reads clouds of smoke rise.* JIM *is heard outside whistling one of the latest dancing tunes. He enters* L. *Slams door.* DAVID *looks up.* JIM *whistles louder, goes to bureau, leaves his hat on upper end, turns with a dancing step to the bench* L. *of table* C., *straddles it, slides along, flops down, stretches out hands under his head—one foot on lower end of table.*)

JIM. Great to get home, when the day's work is over.

DAVID. Work! Did you say work?

JIM. I believe you haven't done a thing but sit there all day feeding that great, greedy mind of yours, David.

DAVID. And what have you been doing?

Jim. We've been keeping up our physical morale, David; we've been dancing for four solid hours.

(*The 'phone on bureau rings.* David *rises and goes to it.* Jim *commences to whistle again, keeping time with his foot which is on the table.*)

David (*to* Jim *to stop his whistling*). Shss-s!

(Jim *stops.*)

(*In 'phone.*) Hullo—No, Mr. Bevans has not come in yet. . . . Oh, any time now.—Very well, hold the line—I said hold the line. (*To* Jim.) Have you got a pencil? (*Takes it from* Jim, *finds a piece of paper on bureau.*) Forge ahead—what's your message? Call Home? Homer? Oh! Aye, Homer, like the poet, the poet, the poet—Homer Johns, at Mayfair 2097. Aye, I will. (*Angrily.*) I can't tell him before he comes in, can I? (*Hangs up the receiver.*)

Jim. Who was it, David?

David. A Mr. Johns, who wants Peter to ring him up. (*He lays the paper on up* L. *of table* C.) A very impatient man.

(Jim *picks up the paper to read it.* David *grabs it away from him, and puts it under a law book on lower* R. *of the table.*)

He should not shout so through the telephone.

(*He turns to easy chair, putting the pencil in his pocket.* Jim *whistles for it.* David *gives it to him.* David *sits in easy chair.*)

I suppose you haven't found a job?

Jim. No, but maybe it's because I haven't looked for one.

David. Aye, man, why don't you look for one?

Jim. Because, Dave, if we looked for it we might find it——

David. Aye, you might——

Jim. And if we found it we might have to take it. (*Rises, goes to piano, takes cushion from stool, comes down* C.) And if we took it we might have to do a little work. (*Sees laundry basket on floor.*) And speaking of work, there's the laundry not put away yet. David, David,—how do you ever expect to succeed in the world if you shirk your duties like that?

David (*earnestly*). It isn't my week on the washing, James—I'm on the door and the telephone.

(Tim *enters* L., *whistling same tune.*)

George is on the washing, aye, and you and Tim——

(Tim, *closing door, stops whistling, looks at* David.)

—ought to be getting dinner.

Tim. What's that!

Jim (*throws cushion on bench* L.). It's our night to get dinner.

Tim. Is it?

Jim. Look in the larder, and see what there is, will you?

(Tim *exits to kitchen, whistling.*)

David. Shss!

(Jim *goes to kitchen door, looks in, then turns to* David, *drawing the door to after him.*)

Jim. Oh, Dave! What do you say to dining out to-night?

David. That's what you always say the night it's your turn to work.

Jim (*crossing to* R. *of* C.). Got any money, Dave?

David. Any what?

Jim. Any money.

David. Don't be absurd.

(Jim *goes up* R.C. *Enter* Tim.)

Tim. There's nothing but some tinned stuff and half an apple pie.

Jim. Got any money, Tim?

Tim (L. *of table* C.). Any what?

Jim. Any money.

Tim. You will have your little joke, won't you?

Jim. Couldn't we borrow something from someone? Our allowance is due the day after to-morrow.

David (*sitting in easy chair, and pointing at mantelpiece*). There's a letter there from your father.

Jim (*rushing to it*). A letter from Father! Good!

Tim. A letter from Father! Splendid! Maybe he's sent it a day or two ahead!

David. Maybe!

Jim (*opens letter; looks for cheque, and his face changes*). It looks as if we'd have to go back to Bradford.

Tim (*picks up envelope from floor to make sure nothing is in it*). To Bradford. . . . That's pretty rough.

David. What's the matter?

Jim. Our dear, dear parent has stopped our allowance. . . .

David. What!

Jim (*moving to* R. *of table* C., *reads*). "Until you obtain a position or until I see some evidence that you are seriously looking for one." Well, hasn't he a suspicious nature. . . . (*Sits* R. *of table* C.)

(*Bell rings off* L.)

David. Answer that door, Tim.

Tim. It's your day on the door, Dave.

(*Exits to kitchen.*)

(David *goes out.* Jim *rises, goes to window up* L., *whistling.*)

David (*outside*). Well!

Postman (*outside*). Mr. Bevans? Sign here.

David. Thank you.

(*He re-enters.*)

Jim. Where is Peter, Dave?

David (*going* r.). He said he wasn't coming home for dinner. (*Looking at letter.*) He's gone to see his girl, and he's going to stay there to dine.

Jim. If he's invited. . . .

David. He's engaged to her, isn't he? (*Puts letter on mantelpiece.*)

Jim. That's what he says, but what does she say?

(*Enter* George *door* l. Jim *crosses to* George.)

Jim. George, got any money?

George (l.c.). Any *what*?

Jim. Any money.

George. What?

Jim. Money. You know.

(*Re-enter* Tim.)

George. I should say not. (*Crossing to table* c.) I've just lost my job.

Jim. You've lost your job?

David. You've lost your job! Why?

George (*sits* l. *of table* c.). Because I'm always late. (*To* Tim.) That's your fault, you always wake me in such a tactless sort of way. I never want to get up.

(Jim *sits chair* l.)

David. I'm sorry you've lost your job, George. And the twins—they've had their allowance stopped.

Jim. Our future home—Bradford.

David (*is sitting in easy chair*). I don't know how we're going to get along—twins with no allowance, George without a job.

Tim (*has put his foot on chair above table, and is unlacing his boots*). Well, the rent's paid till the autumn—that's some comfort.

Jim. Yes, and I suppose we can starve like "little gentlemen" in our own home.

George. For Heaven's sake, Tim, don't take your shoes off in the dining-room. I never saw anything like you fellows. Whenever you're about, the place looks like a pig-stye. Law books all over the table——

(David *rises and takes his books, all but one over message, off the* c. *table, puts them on stand up* r.)

—and look at the laundry—right in the middle of the floor. (*Rises,* l.c., *very angry, to* Jim.) Whose week is it to put away the washing?

Jim. Yours, little bright eyes.

George (*sits* l. *of table* c., *starts looking through the laundry*). All right. Where's the list?

(TIM *gets the list which is pinned on wall below bureau.*)

Hullo, Dave, you've been getting a new pair of pants.

DAVID (*proudly*). Two. (*Puts papers on floor, back of easy chair.*

JIM. Spendthrift.

(TIM *goes to* GEORGE; *pins the list on his coat.*)

(TIM *exits to kitchen.*)

GEORGE (*snatches the list off his coat; holding up ragged socks*). Jim, why do you waste money having socks like that washed? (*Holding them up to view.*)

JIM. What's the matter with those socks? The holes are all below shoe-level—except one, and I paint my heel under that. (*Going to bureau, puts them in drawer.*) My best dancing socks.

DAVID (*sits in easy chair*). I suppose you can get another job, George.

GEORGE (*looking through the laundry*). I hope so—I never wanted to be an accountant, anyhow. That was all my family's bright idea.

JIM (*leaning against front of bureau*). Oh, your family. Where did the idea ever creep in that a family is a blessing?

GEORGE. What's the matter with all of us, anyhow? Why can't any of us get along? (*Rises, picks up the basket, goes up to bureau.*) I'm going to ask Peter.

(JIM *is in his way, leaning against the front of the bureau.* GEORGE *grabs him by the scruff of the neck and pushes him aside.*)

He'll know.

JIM. Yes, and he'll certainly tell us.

(*Enter* PETER *door* L. *The custom of the house is not to exchange greetings.*)

Oh, Peter, got any money?

PETER. Any what?

JIM (*goes to him*). Any money, you know; you must have seen it.

PETER. Not that I can remember. (*Lays coat on chair* L., *crosses to chair* C.)

(DAVID *rises.*)

JIM (L.C.). There's not much to eat in the house. Thought you were going to dine out to-night with the Rolles.

PETER. So did I, but Mrs. Rolles thought differently.

(*Looks at* DAVID, *who comes to* R. *of chair* C. PETER *sits chair* C.)

DAVID (R. *of chair* C.). Is there anything wrong, Peter?

PETER. You bet there is. She came out into the open to-day. She's forbidden me the house.

JIM (L.C., *goes to chair up* L.C.). The motherly old dear!

George *is below bureau, folding an undershirt, which he holds in front of him, the last piece; he has put the rest into the drawers.*)

David. What did Susie say?
Peter. Absolutely nothing.
Jim (*about to sit chair up* L.C.). Ha!

(George *hits him on the head with the undershirt, then puts it in drawer.* Jim *sits.*)

David. Peter, what happened?
Peter. I suppose I wasn't very tactful.

(George *sits on bench* L. *of table* C.)

It began by Mrs. Rolles saying to me—as if she were saying, "What weather we're having"—"The trouble with you, Mr. Bevans, is this: You are not in a position to marry; that is to say, to marry immediately or in the very near future." Of course I had to admit that was all very true.

David. Of course we know that.

Jim. Of course everybody knows that.

Peter (*looking at* Jim). Quite so; quite so—and then she went on to inform me that my business (that of a motor dealer) did not appeal to her.

Boys. Oh!

Peter. She thought it was a precarious business. She said she had been given to understand there was a slight slump at the present moment. She had made inquiries and had discovered that all the miners had bought their cars, and she added that from her point of view (and from her daughter's point of view) the prospect was not a rosy one. She was good enough to say that she liked me personally. . . .

Boys. Oh, Peter; she couldn't help liking you.

David. Everybody likes you, Peter.

Peter. She was very much afraid that her daughter Susie was getting to like me very much. And that she hoped and trusted that, as a man of honour, having regard to all the circumstances, I would not encourage her daughter; and that, for the time being at least, I should put the matter of an engagement out of my head.

David. Was Susie present at this interview?

Peter. Well, she came in just at this point, and I put the question to her, point blank.

David (R. *of chair* C.). What did she say?

Peter. Oh, she said a lot of things, of nice things, but the truth is, she sticks by her mother.

David. I'm afraid—(*hand on his shoulder*)—it's just a question of money with Mrs. Rolles.

(GEORGE *gets up and pats* PETER *on back, absent-mindedly.*)

PETER (*rising, crosses towards chair* L.). I'd go a good way on the downward path to have some at this moment. (PETER *sits chair* L.) Isn't the world rottenly arranged!

GEORGE. I should say it is. (*Sits in chair* C.)

DAVID. Aye, aye!

PETER. By the time I'm an old man I shall probably have all the money I want, and I'd gladly sell the last twenty years of my life for a good income at this very moment.

DAVID (*sitting in easy chair*). Peter, George has lost his job.

(GEORGE *glares at him, throws leg over arm of chair.*)

PETER. Ha!

GEORGE (*pointing at* JIM). And the Twins' allowance is stopped.

PETER. Trying to cheer me up?

(*Looks at* JIM, *who is sitting on chair up* L.C., *absent-mindedly fumbling with* PETER'S *hat.* PETER *rises, takes hat from* JIM.)

(*Peevishly.*) Must you do that?

(JIM *rises, goes to window up* L. PETER *returns to chair* L., *and sits.*)

GEORGE (*rises, goes to him*). Look here, Peter, I want to ask you what's the matter with all of us? Now, here we are, young——

JIM (L. *of piano*). And beautiful.

(TIM *enters from kitchen, stays at door.*)

GEORGE. Why is it none of us can get along?

PETER. Don't you know, George?

GEORGE. No.

PETER. Because we're young, George, and the world is run by old people. (*With feeling. Rising and going up* L.C. *Moves over to table up* R., *takes two tins of tobacco there and pipe.*) Dam 'em! I sometimes wish there wasn't anyone alive over sixty.

TIM (*moving over to* R.). Sixty! Ha! You're liberal. (*Crosses to and takes the banjo from mantel; sits chair* R., *fingering the strings softly.*)

(GEORGE *puts* PETER'S *coat on chair above door* L., *then sits, chair* L.)

JIM (*goes to chair up* L.C.). I offer one perfectly good father to the general massacre. (*Sits.*)

PETER (*coming to up* L. *of table; fills pipe*). It's a conspiracy of old age to keep us down. In the first place, we're educated all wrong——

GEORGE. Eh!

PETER. That's part of the game—they keep us from starting to earn our living as late as they possibly can. Then their advice is all

wrong. As soon as we show any particular ability along any line, they rush in and make us do something entirely different. Just look at me. There's George, he wanted to be a violinist and what is he—an accountant.

(George *lighting cigarette, and swings his legs over* u. *arm of chair.*)

David wanted to be a farmer and he's studying law.

(David *kicks book off table.*)

I don't know what you want, Twins——

Tim *and* Jim. We want to marry an heiress.

Peter. Well, see what happens. (*Sits on* l. *of table* c.) Your father stops your allowance, so that you have to wear cheap ties like that one of Jim's——

(David *rises.*)

which no heiress would tolerate for an instant.

Jim. It's a very smart tie.

Peter. It's a rotten tie, Jim. And here I am, wanting to be a teacher.

George. A teacher!

Peter. What am I? A dealer in motor cars.

David (*filling his pipe from one of* Peter's *tins of tobacco*). Now, do you think you'd have made a good teacher, Peter?

Peter. I know perfectly well I would. Why, David, education is the most interesting subject in the world—and there's more fake about it than about anything else. All you have to do is to think naturally about it. Now, what are the two most important things to us all? I'll tell you—earning a living and falling in love.

George. Eh!

David. Ba! (*Sits* r. *of table* c.)

Peter. Does education teach us either of these? No.

Jim. Do you think you need to be educated to fall in love?

Peter. You have to be educated to fall in love in the right way—to say nothing of needing education to make yourself attractive. Now, I ask you—I took a course in astronomy—a lot of bunk about the motion of stars. Wouldn't it have been more useful if I had taken a course in the psychology of women? (*Puts pipe in his mouth.*) Then I'd have known how to talk to Mrs. Rolles this afternoon.

Jim (*sitting—chair up* l.c.). I'm taking a practical course in that every day.

Peter. And as for the education of girls, that's the most interesting subject of all. An old aunt of mine had a school for girls.

Jim. Oh, you lucky dog.

Peter. Oh, she wouldn't let me go near the place. She deliberately set out to educate those girls to be as unattractive as possible.

David. How did she go about it?

Peter. She made them plaster their hair down, wear a sort of uniform, and she taught them mathematics and Latin and all the things they don't need to know. That's the conspiracy—to keep young people learning the wrong things as long as they possibly can—in the meantime, the old people run the whole show.

(Peter *rises, replaces the two tins of tobacco on table up* R., *takes the pack of cards from the table, comes back to and sits at table* C.)

Jim (*rises, comes down* L.C.). Well, what are we going to do about it?

David (*rises*). I tell you what you are going to do, Jim, you're going to get dinner.

Jim. Ah, the legal mind. What a help it is. Come on, Tim.

(*Exits into kitchen.*)

(Tim *rises,* David *takes the banjo from him, moves him towards kitchen.*)

(Tim *exits into kitchen.*)

(David *places the banjo on the mantelpiece.* George *sees a book still on the table, starts to throw it to* David, *who quickly takes it, showing the paper under it.* George *picks up the paper.*)

George. Hullo! "Ring up Homer Johns!" Well, I must say, David, I do think you might give me my messages—here's an important one from Homer Johns—— (*Going towards telephone.*)

David. Do you know him?

George. Of course I know him.

David. Then tell him not to shout so over the telephone.

George. He's one of the biggest solicitors in London, besides being a director in the bank where I am—I mean where I was, and you leave it kicking about the place.

David. It isn't for you, George. It's for Peter.

George. For Peter? Do you know Homer Johns?

Peter. Never met him. I used to hear my aunt talk of him.

George. Of course it's for me. Dave got it wrong. He's an old friend of my family's. I don't mind telling you fellows—(*rises, carefully closes the kitchen door, down* L.C.)—though I wouldn't mention it to the Twins, that I hope some day to marry his niece.

Peter. His niece!

George. Elise Challoner.

Peter. Does he know that, George?

George (L. *of bureau up* L.). No, not yet.

David (*at easy chair*). Does she know it? (*Sits on arm of easy chair.*)

George. Oh, I guess Elise has a pretty good idea about it. Girls are awfully quick, you know. I ask her to marry me every time I see her!

Peter. I should say she has probably gathered it by this time. Does she always refuse you, George?

George (*boastingly*). No—she never refuses. Once she said: "George, I can't give you any idea how much you bore me." I don't call that a refusal.

(David *slides into chair.*)

Peter. Well, I couldn't consider it exactly encouraging, George.

George. Now, I don't know—I'm not so sure about that. Girls, you know, don't like to show their feelings. (*Sits—bench* L. *of table* C.—*throws paper on table.*)

Peter (*rises, places cards on bureau, comes down* L.C.). Bunk, my dear fellow—all bunk! If a girl wants you—*really* wants you, mind, she'll grab you as she grabs a new hat.

George (*shocked—is sitting* L. *of table* C.). Oh, no, Peter—not the nice ones.

Peter (L. *of* George). You talk as if it wasn't nice to be human.

(Jim *appearing at the kitchen door, and wearing a kitchen apron.*)

Jim. How do you want the potatoes?

Peter (L.C.). Fried!

David. Boiled!

George. Mashed!

Jim. Right. They're *mashed.*

Peter. Why did you ask us, then?

Jim. I was taking the sense of the House. We both want them mashed. That's three mashed against a boiled and a fried.

(*Goes back into the kitchen.*)

David (*rises; going to* R. *of chair* C.; *handing* Peter *a letter*). Oh, Peter, this came a little while ago. An express letter.

Peter. What——? (*Crosses and takes the letter.*)

George (*looking over* Peter's *shoulder at the envelope*). From a firm of solicitors.

(Jim *entering—kitchen door.*)

Jim. Oh, joy! Oh, rapture! We've found a melon in the larder. The melon's rotten, but such as it is——

(George *has grabbed a cushion from behind table* C. *and throws it at* Jim, *who disappears, closing the door "bang."* George *and* David *stand watching* Peter *as he reads.*)

George (*turning to* Peter). Well?

Peter. Well, what do you think about this?

David (R. *of chair* C.). What is it, man?

Peter. I say, what *do* you think?

David. Ye're keeping us in great suspense.
Peter. I've inherited a school.
David. A motor school ?
Peter. No—a girls' boarding school !
George. A *what* ?
Peter. A girls' boarding school.
George. A what ?
Peter (*crossing to chair* R.). You heard me the first time.
George. Yes, I know,—but a—it can't be true.
David (*goes to* Peter's L.). Who is it from, Peter ?
Peter. From Homer Johns. It seems he was my aunt's lawyer, (*reading*) says the property consists of about seven acres, with two large buildings capable of housing fifty pupils with teaching staff and servants' quarters—small cottage where my aunt herself used to live—tennis courts, swimming pool, vegetable and flower gardens—oh, this is not so good—Uh ! (*Sits chair* R.)

(George *hurries to* L. *of* David.)

" Unfortunately of late years, Mrs. Bevans has been expending such large sums on improvements that the property is heavily mortgaged, and the fixed charges almost equal the gross income."

(*The smoke is blown into* Peter's *face.* George *and* David *lean forward to see the letter.* Peter *looks at them ; they straighten up.*)

" The holder of the mortgage, however, is a gentleman whose personal interest in the school would lead him to make the most favourable arrangements consistent with his own interests. We should advise you to confer with us at once in reference to continuing the school along the lines he thinks best." Along the lines he thinks best ! (*To them.*) How about along the lines *I* think best ?
George. Why should anyone leave a girls' school to you ?
Peter. She didn't leave it to me. She died without a will, and I'm the next of kin.
David (*crossing to kitchen door ; shouting*). Jim ! Jim ! Come in here !

(Jim *and* Tim *enter, both wearing kitchen aprons*—Jim C. *of door ;* Tim *is* R. *of and above* Jim.)

Peter has inherited a school.

(George *again leans forward to see the letter, then goes to table* C., *puts cigarette in ash tray.*)

Jim (L. *of* David). Oh, chuck kidding ! Can't you see we're busy ? (*Turns to go out.*)
David (*at* R. *of door, stops them*). No, it's true, I'm telling ye. He's inherited that school from his aunt.
Jim (L. *of* Tim). What kind of a school ?

DAVID. A young ladies' boarding school.

(JIM *crosses to* L. *of* PETER; TIM *on* PETER'S R. DAVID *goes to* R. *of chair* C.; GEORGE *to* R. *of table* C.)

JIM. Congratulations, old man.

(PETER *rises, moves* R.C.)

Well, next to inheriting the Sultan's harem——

DAVID (*stopping* PETER). Peter, pity it isn't a boys' school. Then you could be a teacher at last. You could put those ideas of yours into practice.

PETER. Think I couldn't teach girls?

GEORGE (R. *of table* C.). Of course you could, Peter. (*Goes to chair above table* C. *and sits.*)

TIM (*going to* R. *of* GEORGE). Of course he could.

JIM (*at chair* R.). Of course he could. Maybe not the thing their parents would want them to learn, but still——

PETER. Jim! (*Crosses* L.C.)

DAVID (R. *of chair* C.). Peter, do you think there's any money in it?

PETER. Money in it! You bet there is. There's nothing the great British public laps up like education, properly and attractively presented. I believe I could make the (*refers to letter*) "Fairview School for Girls" one of the most paying investments——

(TIM—R. *of chair* C.)

GEORGE (*rising; hurries down between table* C. *and bench* L.—*to* PETER, *interrupting*). What! Did you say the Fairview School?

PETER (L.C.). Yes, that's the name.

GEORGE (R. *of* PETER). But that's where Elise goes.

DAVID (R. *of chair* C.). Mr. Homer Johns' niece?

GEORGE. Yes, and my sister Sally.

PETER. Your sister goes there? Why, George, you must know all about it. Sit down and tell me everything you know——

(PETER *pushes* GEORGE, *who sits* L. *of table.* DAVID *sits chair* C. JIM *stands* R. *of table* C., *resting his knee on the bench.* TIM *sits on* R.)

GEORGE. Oh, I've never been near the place.

PETER (*standing* L. *of* GEORGE). But you must have heard the girls talk about it. What did they say?

GEORGE. Oh, they say the usual things people say about their own school.

PETER. What sort of things? Do try and think, George. (*Shakes him.*)

GEORGE (*trying hard to remember*). Well, they said it was rotten.

PETER. What was?

George. Everything.

Peter. They must have mentioned some special things. What did they talk about most?

George. The food.

Peter. What did they say about it?

George. They said it was rotten.

Peter. Didn't they say anything about the teachers?

George. Yes, they said they were rotten.

Peter. Which ones?

George. All of them—except Miss Hayes.

Peter. Who is Miss Hayes?

George. I don't know women, but I think she must be the rottenest of all. One of these women who goes around making fun of men. I don't think girls should be allowed to make fun of men, do you?

(Peter *goes towards chair* L.)

Tim *and* Jim (*indignantly*). Certainly not.

Jim. Come on, Tim, let's finish dinner.

(*They cross and go into the kitchen.*)

David. Making fun of men—is the privilege of old maids, isn't it?

George. Miss Hayes isn't so awfully old, and besides, she's been married.

Peter (*comes back to* George). Why does she call herself *Miss* Hayes, then?

George. Because—my mother told me, only, of course, the girls are not supposed to know—they say she's separated from her husband.

Peter (L. *of table*). Separated? Why, I don't think I like the idea of Miss Hayes teaching my girls——

George. Your girls? It's my girl you're talking about.

Peter (*crossing* R.). I believe I'll take a run up there to-morrow and look the property over.

David (*rises*; *follows* Peter). I wouldn't go there, if I were you, Peter, a good-looking young fellow like you.

(George *rises and goes to window up* R.C. Jim *enters from kitchen, carrying the dinner on a tray.*)

Jim. Victuals up, gents. Dinner is served.

(*The door bell rings off* L.)

David (*turns to easy chair*). Answer the bell, Jim, will you?

Jim. You're no cripple, are you, Dave?

David (*going to the door*). I've been doing it all day.

Jim. Then you must do it very well by now.

(David *opens the door* L. *After a pause*, Johns *enters.*)

Johns. Well, this is a nice place to live. Haven't you got a lift?

David. No, I don't think we have. (*To* Jim.) We have no lift?

Jim. No—no—we have no lift. We're all very poor.

Johns. Is this Mr. Peter Bevans?

David. No, it is not!

Johns. Is he in, or isn't he?

George (*hurries to* Johns, *shakes hands*). How do you do, Mr. Johns?

(David *crosses, above, to easy chair after closing door.*)

Johns. Hullo, George, is this where you live?

George. Yes, sir.

Johns. Is Bevans in?

Peter (*coming forward to* R. *of chair* C.). I am Peter Bevans, sir.

Johns (*crossing to* L. *of table;* George *is* L.C.). *You!* Good heavens! *You* own a girls' school!

(David *is* R.C.)

Well, well, well. (*He laughs heartily, while* Peter *remains perfectly grave.*) How did you feel when you heard about your inheritance? Something like the man who inherited two giraffes and a hippopotamus, eh?

Peter. No, Mr. Johns, not at all like that.

Johns (L.C.). Well, it's all right. I'll help you out. I'll take it off your hands. As a matter of fact, I practically own it already.

Peter (*crossing to* Johns). You own my school?

Johns. I have a mortgage of seven thousand pounds on it, and the property isn't worth more than five thousand.

David (*comes down* R.C.). Now, how's that? I'd like to ask you, sir——

(Peter *and* Johns *look at him.*)

—I'm a lawyer myself—why should you, a business man, lend more money on a piece of property than it's worth?

Peter. Yes. My learned friend would like a reply to that. Why?

Johns (*crossing to* L. *of* David). Well—er—matter of friendship.

David. Friendship!

Johns. Yes, my niece is at the school—has been there ever since she came under my charge, and then I've always had a great respect for the lady who is second in command there—Miss Hayes—I

didn't want the school to close—but I had no idea the extravagant programme that Mrs. Bevans was starting on—why, she used the money to fit the place up like a palace—folly, sir, folly—but Miss Hayes is much more sensible.

Peter (l. *of chair* c.). Sit down, Mr. Johns. I'd like to discuss this with you.

(Johns *seats himself in easy chair.*)

You don't mind if we go on with our frugal meal?

Jim. Dinner is served, gents. For the second time.

(Peter, George *and* David *seat themselves at the table.* Jim *and* Tim *wait on them. They serve the soup first, then bring in a large dish with a big cover over it. When the cover is removed, a small tin of bully beef is disclosed. The tin is taken away by them.* Peter *does the carving. The meal proceeds during dialogue.*)

Johns (*in a loud, dictatorial tone*). Now the position is this. Miss Hayes is a University woman——

(Jim *sips his soup loudly.*)

Peter. Jim, don't make such a beastly row.

Johns. She's giving the girls a splendid education,—she's taking all the nonsense out of them—making them sensible—truthful—and healthy. Now, Mr. Bevans, this is my proposition. I will not foreclose and you will not interfere. If we go on losing money, I agree to foot the bills. If we make money, which really isn't at all likely, I'll go shares with you. Now I think that's pretty liberal. I take it, Mr. Bevans, that you approve.

Peter. I don't approve of that idea of education. I don't want the nonsense taken out of girls.

(Johns *stares at him in consternation.*)

No man does. These boys don't. You don't.

Johns. I don't!

Peter. No, you don't in your heart of hearts.

Johns. Well, God bless my soul, how do you want them to be educated?

Peter (*calmly*). I want them educated to be charming.

Johns. *Charming?*

Peter. Yes, charming—charming in the best sense—well-mannered, low-voiced, perfectly dressed, feminine, able to meet all situations. That's what we all want girls to be—why not educate them with that view in mind?

Johns. You can't teach 'em those things.

Peter. You can't, maybe. My aunt couldn't. Perhaps that's why she left the school to me.

Johns. She didn't *leave* it to you. It has come into your hands in an accidental way. If she had willed it to you she ought to have spent the best of her days in a lunatic asylum.

Peter. You think I'm not a fit person to run a girls' school?

Johns. You're about the most unfit I ever saw.

(Jim *and* Tim *take off soup plates and return with beef, potatoes and plates.*)

Peter (*rising and going to* Johns). There you're wrong. I am fitted to run a school—much better fitted than my aunt was, first because I am a business man——

Johns. What!

Peter. Don't interrupt, please. Now the great principle which has made the success of the Press and the Theatre has never been applied to education——

Johns. What principle do you mean?

Peter. The principle of giving your public what it wants.

Johns. Giving the girls what they want?

Peter. No, no one cares about the girls—the parents—the parents are my public.

Johns. Your public?

David (*going to* l. *of* Peter). Peter, you don't mean you'll ever go near the place yourself?

Peter. Not go near it, Dave. I shall live there.

(David *groans and goes back to the table.* George *looks to see what the effect is on* Johns.)

David. Oh, but you can't do that amongst a lot o' lassies.

Peter. Yes, I shall live there and (*going back to table*) direct the school just as my aunt did, but not in the same direction.

Jim (*rising*). Excuse me butting in, but may I ask, have you thought of the effect your peculiar personality would have on a ladies' school?

David. Who ever heard of a man of your age running a girls' school?

Peter (*sitting*). Dave, you ought to get over the idea that because a thing is new it's wrong.

Johns (*going up to* Peter). But what do you know about education?

Peter. More, perhaps, than you imagine. I have my own theories.

Johns. Do you think that any parent who had ever seen you would send a girl to your school?

Peter. Yes, I do, Mr. Johns (*rises*), for it is to parents that I should especially appeal. Sit down, Mr. Johns. I can talk to you very much better if you will only keep still.

(Johns *goes back to his chair and sits.*)

(Peter *stands* L. *of* Johns). Now what is it that every parent who sends a girl to boarding-school really wants?

Johns. To get rid of her.

Peter. Very true—(*pause*)—but that is not all. It is no use to get rid of her for four or five years and then have her thrown back on their hands to be a frightful trouble, an awful anxiety, and a beastly nuisance for the rest of her life. I say to you that parents want girls manufactured into attractive women. I say that is what they want. They do not tell you so, simply because they have not taken the trouble to think the matter out for themselves. But here I am, ready and willing to think for them.

Jim. Oh, Mr. H. G. Wells!

Peter (*coming back to table*). This is quite a serious matter, Jim.

David. My God, it is.

Peter. Here I am, sir, ready to show these poor benighted parents the way—the way that will lead as surely as I'm talking to you to the long-wished-for girl. I shall say to them—and I shall advertise the fact, mark you—you can do nothing without advertisement nowadays—I shall say to them, "Send me your daughters, and in a year or two I promise you I shall mould and form these girls into beautiful and attractive women—women men will want to know—women that men will want to love—charming women men will want to marry." (*Bangs table with fist.*)

Jim (*rises*). Oh, what a picture!

Peter. Yes, Jim! What a picture! What a beautiful picture! So go out into the highways and byways, and advertise my school—not Peter Bevans' school but the Charm School!

(*All the boys strike different attitudes, holding a picture.* Peter *lets his eyes wander to* Johns, *trying to see what effect he has made on him.* Johns *rises slowly, and walks up the stage in deep thought, and turning, comes down stage again.*)

Johns. Mr. Bevans—I have decided—to give you a chance.

(Peter, Tim *and* Jim *are jubilant.* Jim *and* Tim *shout* "Hooray!" *and dance about and take supper things off.* Peter *goes to* David, *expecting to be congratulated, and is disappointed.*)

(*Exeunt* Jim *and* Tim.)

(David *re-lights pipe, goes to and stands at fireplace* R.)

Peter. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Johns. I can promise you that I'll not let you down. Of course, in the direction of this school, I intend to hold myself aloof. I shall be the unseen power—the man behind the gun, as it were.

Johns. I think that would be very wise.

Peter. I hope to make this school up-to-date in every particular. I hope to make the girls' work interesting. For instance, I might possibly arrange for Henry Ainley to come down and lecture on the Drama or Shakespeare. Then some of our chief and most artistic dressmakers might visit the school, and have straight talks with my girls.

Johns. Yes, I think I've got your idea, but one objection occurs to me. Schoolgirls are notoriously silly creatures. Let us suppose, for a minute, that they all took it into their heads to fall in love with you. What then?

Peter. I think that is rather an absurd proposition, Mr. Johns. You will find that they will look upon me as an official—a sort of human machine, placed there for their good. I can be very stern, Mr. Johns.

(David *has been groaning after every one of* Peter's *sentences.*)

(*To* David.) Must you go on making these farmyard imitations?

Johns. But take it on the score of age. Don't you think you're rather young to run a girls' school?

George. I should say he is.

Peter. It's a question of character, not age. I've known and I've heard of quite a lot of middle-aged men I shouldn't care to trust in my school.

Johns. Eh?

Peter (*laughingly*). No, sir, you can make your mind easy on that score. I am not a man who inspires affection.

David. But you are, man, you are.

Peter. David, you're a flatterer. (*To* Johns.) As a matter of fact, I'm in love with a girl, and this new work of mine may bring me in sufficient money to permit of my asking her the vital question.

Johns. I take it you will train these girls for the university examinations?

Peter. I shall do nothing of the kind. My school will be a finishing school.

Johns. The Fairview School has always made a specialty of university examinations?

Peter. Yes, and look at the mortgage on it.

Johns. Do you think you know more about education than people who have given their lives to it?

Peter. I know more about girls than a lot of old women do.

Johns. Miss Hayes isn't old.

Peter. Miss Hayes?

Johns (*embarrassed*). Yes. The lady I spoke of—the lady I wish left in charge.

Peter. Now, I'm not asking you to lend me money to carry out these ideas. . . . But what I do ask is this—that you leave

your money in the school for a time, and that you won't withdraw your niece——

(Johns *looks at him suspiciously.*)

—at least, till the end of the term.

Johns (*suspicious; quickly*). Did you ever see my niece?

Peter. No, no, she's nothing but a pupil to me . . . but it'd be a terrible black eye to the new management if you—such a prominent patron of the school——

Johns (*looking at him*). Eh?

Peter. Were to be the first to remove a pupil.

David (*earnestly*). Peter, for goodness' sake give up this idea. Let Mr. Johns take over the school. You can't lose anything and you may make a few hundred pounds.

(Johns *looks at* David, *approving.*)

Peter. Dave, there isn't anything anyone could say would make me give it up.

(David *sits in chair* R.)

Johns. All right, young man, all right, you're a fine salesman and a good talker. I'll leave my niece.

George (*rises, and coming down*). I wouldn't do that if I were you, sir.

Johns. How about your sister Sally, George?

George. Oh, it's all right about Sally, but I don't want Peter teaching Elise.

(*Moves up and meets* Peter *at head of table, who expostulates.*)

Johns (*to* Peter). Very well, Mr. Bevans, I'll leave my niece at the school and I'll leave my money in it on two conditions.

Peter. Good! what are they?

Johns. First, that no one falls in love with you.

Peter. I guarantee that absolutely.

George. I don't see how you can guarantee a thing like that.

David. It's impossible.

Johns. Remember that if anyone falls in love with you, I'll foreclose.

Peter. If one of the girls did fall in love with me, it would ruin the school! Well, you bet your life I won't let that happen. What's your other condition?

Johns. That you retain Miss Hayes as second-in-command.

Peter. I don't know about that.

Johns (*beginning to be angry*). What objection have you to Miss Hayes? You have to have some woman there. I suppose you will admit that.

Peter. Yes. I must have a woman in charge. But I'm not sure that she would be the best.

Johns. What have you got against Miss Hayes?

Peter. She's not a relative of yours, is she?

Johns (*embarrassed*). Well, she's a sort of connection—by marriage.

Peters. I understand that this lady is separated from her husband.

Johns (*bursting out*). Well, what if she is? Are you going to hold it against a woman if she was once silly enough to allow herself to marry a bad-tempered man that no one could get along with?

Peter. You knew her husband, then?

Johns. Yes, I know a lot about him.

Peter. And you think it was all his fault?

Johns. Yes, I do—— (*A slight pause.*) Almost all.

Peter. The question is—would she have a good influence on my girls?

George (*standing at chair* L.). *Your* girls!

Johns (*suddenly chuckling*). Well, it might have a very good influence on her.

Peter. On her?

Johns. To have a man over her for a few months.

Peter. A few months?

Johns. You don't suppose you are going to last longer than the end of the term, do you?

Peter. Mr. Johns, I expect to live and die as the successful principal of the Fairview School for Girls! (*Walks firmly to the bureau and opens drawer.*)

(Johns *gestures* "Hopeless." *Crosses to chair* R., *sits.*)

George. What are you going to do, Peter?

Peter (*taking bunch of telegraph forms out of drawer*). I'm going to send a telegram saying that I shall be there to-morrow morning to inspect the school. (*Calling.*) Hi, there! Jim!

Jim *and* Tim (*off*). Yes, sir. Coming, sir.

(*Enter* Jim *and* Tim—*marching round.*)

Jim (*to* Peter). Yes, sir.

David. Don't do this, Peter. Can't you see you'll make yourself ridiculous? (*Crosses* L.)

Peter (*writing*). "Miss Hayes, Fairview School, Westchester, Shropshire. Will arrive to-morrow morning to inspect school. Peter Bevans." (*To* Jim.) Have you got any money?

Jim. Oh, don't crack that one on me again! (*Walks away.*)

Peter (*to* Tim). Here, Tim, old man, just run with this to the post office, like a good fellow. And here's a bob.

Tim (*brightly*). For me?

PETER. No. For the Postmaster-General.

(*Takes cap from bureau and shoves it on* TIM'S *head, then pushes him out of the door, himself following.* MR. JOHNS *goes to* C.)

DAVID (*coming* C.; *to* JOHNS). Mr. Johns, you're a sensible man, won't you make Peter drop these plans of his? You don't think he can make a success of it?

JOHNS. Certainly not, Mr. MacKenzie, but when an obstinate man has got hold of something that you want yourself, sometimes the quickest way to get it away from him is to let him ruin it his own way.

GEORGE (L. *of* JOHNS). But you don't really approve of Peter having the instruction of a girl like Elise. (*Quickly apologizing.*) Of course, it's nothing to me, Mr. Johns——

JOHNS. Oh no, of course not, George. Why don't you apply for a job there yourself?

(PETER *re-enters.*)

Girls ought to understand how to balance a cheque-book. (*Going to* L.)

(GEORGE *sits* R. *of table.* DAVID *sits* C., *behind table.*)

Oh, Mr. Bevans. I was just saying, that you ought to get George to give a course of household accounting. Women should understand such things.

PETER (L. *of* JOHNS). Yes; they certainly ought.

JIM (*between* PETER *and* JOHNS). Oh, Peter, if you give George a job, what about Tim and I? We need one terrifically.

PETER (*crossing to mantel*). Nothing doing, Jim.

JIM (L. *of* JOHNS). Oh, Mr. Johns, speak to him. We need a job worse than anybody else. Our father has stopped our allowance until we find one.

(TIM *re-enters and joins* JIM.)

JOHNS (*crossing to* L. *of* PETER, R.C.). Come now, Mr. Bevans, aren't you a little inconsistent to refuse your friends? If girls are to learn charm, so much better from you than from your aunt, why shouldn't they learn—(*turns to* TWINS)—what is it you teach, young gentlemen?

JIM (L. *of* TIM). I am a dancing instructor.

TIM. And I play tennis and hockey and the banjo.

JOHNS. There you are—dancing, athletics, and the banjo from these young men.

PETER (R.). Ah, you're none of you serious, but I am.

JOHNS (*looks at him*). By Jove, I believe you are.

(JIM *sits up* L. TIM *stands near him.*)

Peter. You bet I am. I'm going there to-morrow to take over the entire management. I wish you'd come with me.

Johns. Oh no. I can't do that. How'll you go about it?

Peter. I shall have the whole school assembled, and make them a short address describing my aims and methods. Then I shall have a little chat with the teachers, make up my mind which will be suitable to my ideas——

Johns (*chuckling and moving* L.). I'd give ten years to be there.

Peter. Why don't you come and introduce me?

Johns. By George! I believe I will! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll motor you down. I'll call for you to-morrow morning at 9.30.

Peter. Right, 9.30.

(*The bell rings, off* L.)

David. Answer the bell, Tim, since you're up.

Tim (*hastily sitting down* L. *of table* C.). But I'm not up, Dave.

(David *crosses above to door* L.)

George. I can go with you, too, Peter, look over the books and give you some idea of your financial position.

Johns. Why, he hasn't got any financial position.

(David *opens door.*)

Peter (R.). But I will have. (*Goes to mantel.*)

As soon as the Twins *see* Elise *they are very interested and slip the aprons off.* Jim's *on chair up* L.C. Tim *rises* L. *of table* C., *drops his apron there.* David *opens door* L. Elise *is standing there. She is small, very gentle, and hides under timidity the will of iron.*)

Elise. I beg your pardon. (*Timidly.*) Is Mr. Johns here?

George (*turns; sees* Elise). Why, Elise!

Elise. Hello, George!

(Twins *take a good look at* George's *sweetheart.*)

Johns (C.; *raising his voice*). What are you doing here?

Elise. Oh! Uncle—(*crossing towards* Johns)—I've been waiting hours and hours downstairs in the motor—the chauffeur said he was to meet you here at six.

Johns. Why aren't you at school?

Elise. Well, I thought I'd like to go to the theatre to-night, uncle darling.

Johns. There must be fine discipline at your school.

Elise. There isn't any, when Miss Hayes is away.

Johns. Where *is* Miss Hayes?

Elise. She's gone home for a few days.

Johns. Gone home!

Elise. Yes, her mother's very, very ill.

Johns. Huh!

Elise. And, of course, we can do anything we like with Miss Curtis.

Peter. Ah!

Johns (*beginning to shout*). Well, you can't do anything you like with me.

Elise. Oh yes, I can.

Johns. You'll go straight back there to-night.

Elise. Oh, no, no, no, not to-night. (*Patting his cheeks.*) Uncle darling.

Johns. By the next train. I never heard such nonsense.

George (*steps forward, r. of* Johns). Oh, do please let her stay, Mr. Johns, and we'll all go to the theatre.

Tim *and* Jim (*come forward, to* l. *of* Elise). Ah, please do, Mr. Johns.

Johns (*crossing to* David, l.). Mr. MacKenzie, what do you think of this?

(Elise *follows to* r. *of* Johns.)

David (*solemnly*). Well, I think in principle the young lady ought to go back to her school.

(*The* Boys *glare at* David *for suggesting such a thing.*)

Elise. Oh! Mr. MacKenzie!

(*Smiles at* David. David *weakens.*)

David. But in view of the circumstances, I should make an exception.

Elise (*beaming on* David). Oh, that is nice of you. (*Shakes hands with* David.) How do you do? (*Turns to the* Twins.)

(Johns *crosses over to* Peter *at mantel;* Elise *follows him.*)

Johns. And what do *you* think I ought to do?

Peter (*comes down* r.c. *; very stern*). Send her straight back to school.

Elise (*angrily*). Oh! (*Stamps her foot.*)

Johns (*taking his hat*). That settles it. Back you go!

(Elise *remonstrates.* Johns *takes her by the hand and hurries her off,* Elise *protesting.*)

No—no—no, it's no good. Back you go!

(George *hurries to door, opens it as* Johns *hurries* Elise *out.*)

Curtain.

ACT II

Scene I

Scene.—*The main hall of the School.*

Everything about the set shows the best taste, but executed in a quiet, simple manner. On L. *above the return is a fireplace built into the set, about* 18 *inches above the mantel is a flat extending across stage to* R. *On* R. *above the return is a fireplace built into the set. Both sides of the set below the flat are exactly alike. This flat is divided into three equal sections, by two posts. Two high arches, and the space on the* R. *contains a glass door which swings down and off, leading into another section of the house and* L. *of this door a low, broad stairway of six steps running straight up stage to a platform—then off to* R. *There is a high, narrow window above platform. Back of the two arches—*C. *and* L.*—is a rectangular space about* 8 *by* 20 *feet; in the wall side on* L. *is a door, swinging up and off. In the back flat on* L. *proportioned to the arch* L. *is a large glass door, swinging up stage and on, with narrow side windows. The rest of back flat is blank, with a side piece coming down stage to the post* R.C. *The partition between the stairs and this section of the set. The above glass door is the general entrance from outside. Above this is a porch and rail—backed by a landscape drop—trees, shrubs, etc., in blossom—as it is spring-time. The door on* L. *is backed by an interior backing—on* R. *by an interior backing. A plan of the* Scene *will be found at the end of the play.*

Time.—*Noon, the following day.*

(*Discovered:* Miss Curtis *is at desk* L.*—going over her account book, adding up figures, evidently very much distressed. As she holds her head in her hand* Sally *enters—running down the stairs* R. *with "Eve." She stumbles and falls above and to* L. *of sofa* R. *On seeing* Miss Curtis *she snatches up an atlas and hides "*Eve*" in it.*)

Miss Curtis (*startled*). Oh, Sally!

Sally. Shall I be in your way if I study in here, Miss Curtis?

Miss Curtis (*not looking up*). No, of course not, child. What are you studying, Sally?

Sally (*sits on sofa* R.). Physical geography, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis. If you come to any knotty points, you may bring them to me—but don't disturb me if you can help it—I'm so anxious to get these books in order before Mr. Bevans arrives.

Sally. Too bad his coming the very day Miss Hayes is away.

Miss Curtis. Oh, I think she'll be here. I telegraphed for her yesterday.

Sally (*eagerly*). What do you suppose Mr. Bevans will be like, Miss Curtis?

Miss Curtis. I haven't the least idea, Sally, but I'm sure of one thing—any relation of dear Mrs. Bevans is bound to be a Christian gentleman.

Sally (*drearily*). I'm afraid so.

(Muriel *and* Ethel *enter room,* R. Ethel *goes to piano and sits. She is wearing very large comb in her hair, on* R. *side.* Muriel *to* L. *of* Sally, *looking over her shoulder.*)

Muriel. What are you reading, Sally?

Sally (*driving her away*). Shhss—shut up!

Muriel. I'm going to tell.

(Ethel *strikes a low note on piano.* Miss Curtis *jumps.* Muriel *goes to piano, sits on bench, below* Ethel. *They start practising the scale and singing.* Miss Curtis *nearly goes mad. She holds her head as if it would burst.* Elise *appears on stairs and takes in the situation.* Sally *rises, carrying the atlas, she also sings the scales, mocking the girls, and crosses to above post* L.C.)

Elise. Muriel! Ethel! (R. *of them.*) You are almost driving poor Miss Curtis mad.

(*They stop.*)

Miss Curtis. Oh, no, Elise, don't stop them! It's very silly of me not to be able to work while they practise.

Muriel (*bobbing her head at* Elise). I've got to do my scales, Elise.

Elise. Do them in the music room.

Muriel. It's so chilly there.

Elise. That's what a music room is for.

(Elise *goes to* C. *The* Girls *again run the scales and sing. Three times—stop.* Sally *goes to sofa* L., *lounges on it, still absorbed in her story.*)

Miss Curtis. I'm so anxious to get these books in order before Mr. Bevans arrives—and he may be here *any* moment now.

Elise (*coming to sofa* L.C., *facing* Miss Curtis). What do you think he'll be like, Miss Curtis?

Miss Curtis. I haven't the least idea—but do you know—whenever I'm in doubt I always consult the Bible—just open it anywhere

and put my finger on a verse. I did it this morning, and what do you suppose the verse was?

Elise. Tell us, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis. What the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon: "Verily, the half was not told to me."

(Elise *crosses to sofa* R., *kneels on it, reaches over to desk* R. Ethel *runs scale and sings to show* Muriel *the way it should be done.*)

Sally (*dispassionately; is lounging on sofa* L.). I suppose you know the gardener Parker is drunk again, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis (*shocked*). Mercy me, Sally! Parker tipsy? It cannot be.

Sally. Yes, tipsy. He's taking full advantage of Miss Hayes being absent.

Miss Curtis. I deeply regret that you have witnessed such a thing.

Sally. Well, I couldn't help seeing the gentleman. He's been rowing the cook on our lake all the morning, just under my window.

(Elise *attempts to stop them.*)

Miss Curtis. Heavens, child!

Muriel (*goes to* Sally). Was the conversation worth listening to?

Miss Curtis. Muriel!

Sally. He was making love to her, my dear.

Miss Curtis. Children!

Ethel *and* Muriel. Tell us what he said.

Sally. Well, he said something to this effect.

(*She whispers to* Muriel *and* Ethel. *The girls laugh.*)

Miss Curtis. Sally!

Sally. Cook thought it was funny, too. She laughed so much she nearly fell out of the boat—(*comes* C.)—but when I came in they were not getting on so well. In fact, they were having a frightful row.

Miss Curtis (*comes* C.). This must be stopped. Oh, for the day when Prohibition will be accepted by the entire nation. See what drink leads to, girls. Flirting, and other dreadful things. I must go to them, although I haven't the least idea what I shall say.

Elise. Shall I go, Miss Curtis?

Miss Curtis. Certainly not, Elise. That would be most improper.

(Miss Curtis *exits up* L.C.)

(Elise *goes to sofa* L.; *sits.* Muriel *crosses to* R. *of desk* R., *kneels on chair, dips pen in ink and shakes ink on floor, tries to write; again dips pen in ink and repeats the business.* Madge *and* Alix

come downstairs and move to sofa R. *and sit, followed by* LILLIAN, *who goes to* R. *of piano.* ETHEL *sits on piano bench.* MURIEL *starts to sing slowly.* ETHEL *picks it up on piano. All the other girls slowly come in.*)

SALLY (*front of post,* L.C.). It seems as if school got rottener every day.

ETHEL. It always seems worse in spring.

MURIEL (*kneeling on chair,* R. *of desk* R.). Certainly, the food is rottener.

SALLY. *Food!* I haven't seen any real—what I call food—since I came here. (*Slides down; sits on floor; front of post,* L.C.)

LILLIAN (*going to* C.). I shouldn't mind so much, if they taught us anything really useful—(*to* L., *whirls about, jumps on upper arm of sofa* L.)—like a new step in dancing.

(ELISE *rises; sits on top of piano.*)

MADGE (*rises, going to piano*). Oh, what's the use of knowing how to dance if there aren't any boys to dance with? (*Sits on bench below* ETHEL.)

(ETHEL *commences to play again.*)

MURIEL (*sits—chair* R.). I feel as if I should die if I didn't see an attractive man within twenty-four hours.

SALLY. Any kind would do me.

ALIX (*sitting on sofa* R.; *to* MURIEL). But—but—but—you see—please——

LILLIAN (*on sofa* L.). Quiet, there, quiet!

(ETHEL *stops playing.*)

LILLIAN. Alix is trying to say something in English.

(ETHEL *slides down on bench, shoves* MADGE *off.* MADGE *stands at post* R. *of piano.*)

ALIX. But I heard they say in France that *les jeunes filles anglaises* —the Eenglish girls—do not like the men.

MADGE. Mustn't believe all you hear, old thing?

SALLY. I think some one's been pulling your leg.

ALIX. No. Nobody touch my leg.

SALLY. Alix, do you like men?

ALIX (*rises, crosses to* L. *of desk* L.). I—oh, yee-es—I like the men, I like them—very, very much——

SALLY. And I like them very much. But there are no men here to like. So what are you going to do about it?

ETHEL. So do I like men, a different one every day. (*Turns to piano.*)

SALLY. Ethel, I call that flirting.

(Madge *sits sofa* R. Lillian *sits sofa* L. Sally *at post* L.C. Alix L. *of desk* L. Muriel *sits* R. *of desk* R.)

Elise. No, you're all wrong, Sally, that's not flirting.

(Ethel *starts to play on the piano.*)

Lillian. I know a school where they have a regular dance with boys every Saturday night.

Madge. I should adore that.

Lillian. How divine.

Sally. Some school, that!

Ethel. I wonder if we couldn't introduce that idea here.

Sally. With Miss Hayes? Not much.

Ethel. Oh, no, Sally, with the new principal. Perhaps we could arrange it with Mr. Bevans.

Sally. In the long run, you can usually arrange anything with a man.

Elise. Particularly an old man. I can do anything I like with my uncle.

Sally. He wouldn't let you stay in town last night.

(*All* Girls *laugh. The music stops.*)

Elise. Oh, that wasn't my uncle. That was the fault of a young man.

Girls. Who was it?

Elise. I don't know his name, but he was there in the room with my uncle. Everything was going perfectly. Uncle was giving way beautifully. We'd almost arranged to go to a theatre when suddenly my uncle turned round and asked this man what he was to do in the matter—whether he was to allow me to stay in town or send me straight back to school.

Girls. And what did he say?

Elise (*comes* C., *imitates* Peter's *manner*). Looking as stern as a Lord Chief Justice, he said (*in a deep voice*), "Send her back at once."

Girls. What a shame!

Madge. What did he want to interfere for?

Sally. And you don't know him? (*Coming to* Elise.) Never met him before?

Elise. Never in my life. But he's a perfect beast, and you just wait until I meet him again. I shall make just a few very emphatic remarks to that young man! Look out, girls—Miss Curtis!

(Miss Curtis *enters up* L.C. *She is very agitated. The* Girls *all stand very demurely.* Elise *and* Alix L. *of* Miss Curtis. Sally R. *of* Miss Curtis.)

Miss Curtis. Oh, that's very much better, but it was such hard

work! Do you know, dears, I don't believe men would ever take that horrid stuff if they knew how uncontrolled it made them appear.

MURIEL (*crossing toward her*). Did you settle him, Miss Curtis?

MISS CURTIS. Yes, I quieted him. He seemed to fall into a sort of stupor.

MURIEL. That's a new name for it.

MISS CURTIS. I hope he'll be better by the time Miss Hayes comes back.

(*Bell sounds off* U.L.)

MURIEL. There's the eleven o'clock recess.

(MISS CURTIS *goes to* L. *of desk* L. *The* GIRLS *move over to door* R.)

ELISE (*starts with* GIRLS, *comes back to* C.). Can't I help you, Miss Curtis? I'm not much good at figures, but——

SALLY (*at door* R.—*to* C.). Come on, Elise. Have you forgotten? We have a senior class meeting, and you are in the chair.

ELISE. Shss—don't be so noisy.

(*All the* GIRLS *go off.*)

(ELISE *goes to* MISS CURTIS *and puts her arm round her.*)

Can I help you?

MISS CURTIS. Thank you, dear. I'll get along somehow—but I wish Miss Hayes were here.

(*Exits* ELISE.)

(*Goes on murmuring as she works.*) How very annoying! That's the seventh time I've done this column and each time I make it a different total. Nine and four are thirteen . . . thirteen and four are seventeen . . . seventeen and five——

(JOHNS *enters door up* L.C., *wears cap and automobile coat, comes down to* C. MISS CURTIS *springs up.*)

JOHNS. Ah!

MISS CURTIS. Oh!

JOHNS. This must be the place!

MISS CURTIS (*coming* L.C. *and dropping her papers all over the place*). Oh, Mr. Bevans! We've been expecting you. I'm so sorry Miss Hayes isn't here. I am Miss Curtis, the School's Secretary.

JOHNS (*in a loud voice*). I am not Mr. Bevans, Miss Curtis.

MISS CURTIS (L. *of* JOHNS). Oh, do excuse me. (*Picking up papers from floor*). I'm just a little agitated. You see, we're expecting our new principal to-day. Are you a—might I ask—are you a parent?

JOHNS. No, I'm not. My name is Johns.

MISS CURTIS (*backing away*). Johns, Johns! Not—not—not

JOHNS. Homer Johns is my name.

(Peter *enters door up* L.C., *carries derby hat, and wears overcoat.*)

Miss Curtis. *Oh,* good gracious! But what are you doing here? (*Sits on sofa in front of desk* L.)

Johns. I came to bring you your new principal.

(Peter *comes down* L. *of* Johns.)

Miss Curtis, this is Mr. Bevans.

Miss Curtis (*jumps up, turns and sees* Peter; *gives a low cry*). Heavenly day—Him! (*Corrects herself.*) I mean—He! (*Backs to upper end of sofa* R.)

(Peter *goes to* Miss Curtis *and shakes hands with her. Is exceedingly affable and charming. Retains her hand in his while he talks to her.*)

Peter. How do you do, Miss Curtis? One of the mistresses, I presume?

Miss Curtis (*fearfully embarrassed*). Er—er—no, sir. I'm the secretary.

Peter. The secretary? I see. I'm very glad indeed to meet you, and we shall become better acquainted in a few days. And now I'm going to ask you to do something for me. I'm very anxious indeed to get to work immediately. I should like to inspect the buildings and grounds, and then later in the morning, I wish you would assemble the entire school, so that I can give them a short address.

Miss Curtis (*weakly*). Give them a shorter dress? (*Vaguely.*) Oh! say a few words to them? And you wish me to do all this now? Yes, Mr. Bevans—I'll see to it at once—of course, I'll go at once. Oh dear . . . oh dear! Will you just wait here a moment, please . . . just . . . just one moment . . . oh dear! Oh dear!

(*Nervous business.* Peter *follows her to the door* R., *bowing and smiling.*)

(*Exit* Miss Curtis R.)

(Peter *watches her out; looks at* Johns; *goes to sofa* R.; *looks at painting on wall above mantel on* R.—*the portrait of his late aunt.*)

Johns (*comes to* L. *of* C.). Well, are you beginning to feel nervous?

Peter. Not in the least.

Johns. Well, if I were about to address a lot of giggling girls, I should be nervous.

Peter. Oh, they won't giggle.

(*Re-enter* Miss Curtis R., *looking at* Peter, *hardly able to speak.*)

Miss Curtis (*very agitated and fussy*). Oh, gentlemen . . . would you mind, gentlemen, waiting in that room—just for a moment, please—if you don't mind—you see, I fear it would be somewhat of

a shock to the dear girls if they should see you unexpectedly. (*Runs straight across stage to door* L.)

Johns. See me?

Miss Curtis. No, no, both of you. (*Pointing to door.*) Do you mind, gentlemen, just a moment . . .? (*Holds door open for them.*)

(*Exeunt* Peter *and* Johns, L.I.E.)

(Miss Curtis *runs across the stage and closes the door* R. *Then enter* Miss Hayes, L.U.E. *She is wearing hat and travelling-dress, and carrying umbrella and small dressing-bag. She comes down* C.)

(*Agitated and half-fainting.*) Eleanor! Oh, Eleanor!

Miss Hayes. Well, Theodosia?

Miss Curtis. Thank Heaven you have come back! Oh, Eleanor—the most wonderful thing has happened.

Miss Hayes (*very calm*). What has happened, Theodosia?

Miss Curtis (R. *of* Miss Hayes, *pointing to door* L.). Listen, Eleanor, there's a young man in there who looks like a Greek god, and says he owns the school, and wants to inspect it.

(Miss Hayes *begins to smile at the idea.*)

Ah, you wouldn't smile, my dear, if you had seen him. I tell you he's the kind of a young man who should never come into a girls' school. Why, he's *beautiful.*

Miss Hayes (*laughs*). Well, of course, Theodosia, that's very wrong of him, but if he owns the school, we can't very well keep him out, can we? (*Turns to go to door* L.) I'll go and speak to him.

Miss Curtis. Oh, no, no——

(Miss Hayes *turns to her.*)

You can't do that, either. Because another terrible thing has happened.

Miss Hayes. Now, what has happened, Theodosia?

Miss Curtis. He was brought here by your—by Mr. Johns.

Miss Hayes. By Homer?

Miss Curtis (*distracted*). Yes, yes, of course, you can't see them. I'll have to do it. You had better go upstairs and lock yourself in your room—only tell me what to say——

Miss Hayes. Lock myself in my room? Nonsense! If Mr. Johns can bear seeing me, I think I can bear seeing him. I shall behave as if he were any other parent or guardian of the school. Nothing will annoy him more than that. (*Crosses to* R. *of desk* R., *removing gloves, etc.*)

(Miss Curtis *goes up* C.)

(*Looks off door* L.). They want to inspect the school, do they? Very well, I'll take them over it.

Miss Curtis. Oh, Eleanor, I do think you're brave.

Miss Hayes. Will you please go and tell them to come in, Theodosia?

Miss Curtis. Yes—yes—I will. (*Starts for door, turns to* Miss Hayes.) I'll bring your smelling salts, you'll need them.

(Miss Hayes *smiles.*)

(Miss Curtis *goes to* L. *Calling off.*) Gentlemen, will you please come this way?

(*As they appear.*)

Miss Hayes is here.

(Peter *enters, comes to* C. Johns *follows him in to* L. *of* C. Miss Hayes *picks up paper on desk* R., *glances at it.* Miss Curtis R. *of post* L.C.)

Peter. Is this Miss Hayes?

(Miss Hayes *looks only at* Peter. *It is a shock to* Johns *to find her there.*)

Miss Hayes. How do you do, Mr. Bevans?

Peter (*noticing that she pays no attention to* Johns). I believe you have met Mr. Johns?

Miss Hayes (*perfectly civil*). Not for some years. (*She tears the paper* Miss Curtis *has put on desk* R., *drops the pieces in waste-paper basket in front of desk—looks at* Johns.) You have put on weight and are much older since last we met, Mr. Johns——

(Johns *buttons his coat.*)

Now, Mr. Bevans, I understand you want to inspect the school. I am at your disposal. What would you like to see first?

Peter (R.C.). I would like to look at the little cottage where my aunt——

Johns (L.C., *interrupting*). Before you start on your tour of inspection, might I have a word with you in private, Miss Hayes?

(Peter *turns up* R.C., *to piano.*)

Miss Hayes. I'm afraid not, Mr. Johns. But if you have anything to say about your niece Elise, Miss Curtis is disengaged, I think.

(Miss Curtis, *standing at post* L.C., *very obliging, comes down* R. *of* Johns, *who displays irritability.*)

Miss Curtis. Oh! yes, yes, of course—Elise, the dear child——

Johns (*ignores* Miss Curtis). This isn't about Elise.

(Miss Curtis *shudders, goes to sofa* L.)

It's about the school—the general welfare of the school.

MISS HAYES (R. *of desk* R.). Write to us about it, Mr. Johns, and I'm sure Miss Curtis will send you a prompt reply.

MISS CURTIS (*obliging*). Yes, yes, of course.

(MISS CURTIS *crosses to* L. *of desk* L. JOHNS, *in a temper, goes up*—L.C.)

MISS HAYES (*crossing to* L. *of sofa* R.). And now, Mr. Bevans——

(PETER *comes down*—R. *of* MISS HAYES.)

You were saying you wanted to see your aunt's cottage?

PETER (L. *of* MISS HAYES). Yes, I'd like to know how soon I can move in.

MISS HAYES (*startled for the first time*). Move in? You don't intend to live there?

PETER. I certainly do. I'd like to see that first and then the other buildings—and then we'll go over the books——

MISS CURTIS (*flustered; picks up ledger, holds it in her arms*). Oh! Oh, yes—yes—the books—the books—I'm so sorry, Mr. Bevans, but you see the books are not quite in order. You see, I'm not really an accountant.

PETER (*coming towards desk* L.). It's of no consequence, Miss Curtis, my lawyer will be here in a few minutes with an expert accountant.

MISS CURTIS. Oh, isn't that nice, we are to have an expert account—

(*Catches* JOHNS' *eye, as he is glancing at her.*)

—ant. (*Replaces ledger on desk* L.)

PETER (*coming* C.). And now, Miss Hayes, if there are any special problems of the school that you would like to bring to me, I should be delighted to take them up with you.

MISS HAYES (R.C.). One moment, Mr. Bevans, you don't mean that you intend personally to have anything to do with the management of this school?

PETER (R. *of* C.). I certainly do—with the organization, the finances, and the general scheme. You see, Miss Hayes, I have some very decided views on the subject of the education of girls. I think that girls——

JOHNS (*coming down between the two*). I believe that I could explain Mr. Bevans' views to you—if you would let Miss Curtis show him over the place.

MISS HAYES (*crossing to* L. *of* JOHNS). Thank you, I prefer to hear them from Mr. Bevans, himself. He can tell me as we go. (*Going to door up* L.C.)

PETER (*joining* MISS HAYES—*on her* R.). Certainly. You see,

Miss Hayes, my idea is that girls should be educated to be charming——

(*Both exit door up* L.C.)

Miss Hayes (*off*). To be what?

Peter (*off*). Educated to be charming——

Johns (*by now thoroughly out of temper, standing* C.). Well, madam, I suppose we might as well follow in their trail.

Miss Curtis (*goes to his* L.). Oh, yes, I own I am interested to hear Mr. Bevans' views on education.

(*Starts for door.* Johns *stops her.* Sally *is seen peering through door* R. Muriel *and the other* Girls *are behind her.*)

Johns. Oh, I can tell you—he wants girls educated to be charming.

Miss Curtis. Charming—that would be original. But how?

Johns (*going up to door up* L.C.). I don't know—

(*They go out door up* L.C., Miss Curtis *running after him.*)

—but I suppose you can knock anything into their stupid little heads if you try hard enough. The idea is that—

(Sally *runs up to door, followed by* Muriel *; they look off after them. The other* Girls *run in, look at each other—ad lib.* Ethel *sits on sofa* R. *;* Lillian *goes to sofa* L., *sits ;* Alix *goes* R. *of desk* R. *;* Madge *goes above desk* R.)

Muriel (*turning to* Girls). Did you ever hear anything like that? (*Runs back to* R.C.)

Sally (*disapprovingly, at door up* L.C. *Looking off*). So that's him, is it?

Muriel (*calling off door* R.). Elise, Elise, come here! Something awful has happened.

(*Enter* Elise *door* R.)

Elise (*to* L. *of sofa* R.). What is it?

(Lillian *rises—to* R. *of* C.)

Muriel (L. *of* Elise). Mr. Bevans has come, and he's perfectly horrid.

Elise. What's he like?

Muriel. Oh, he's old and he looks cross.

Sally. And he's big and fat. (*Coming down* L. *of* Muriel.)

(Lillian *sits, sofa* L.)

Muriel. And he wants us educated to be charming.

Elise. But we are charming. He hasn't seen us yet.

ALIX (R. *of desk* R.). Charmant. Charmant, comment charmant ?

ETHEL (*sitting on sofa* R.). How's he going to do that, I should like to know.

MURIEL (R. *of* C.). He doesn't know—but he says he can knock it into our stupid little heads——

ELISE. What ! Knock—— I don't like the sound of that, at all.

SALLY (L. *of* MURIEL). I think that's simply insulting. What does a fat hog like that know about being charming ? He might be a judge of a good dinner, but——

ELISE. Girls, I think we will teach that old man a lesson.

(MADGE R. *of* ELISE.)

ETHEL. But what shall we do, Elise ?

ELISE (*crossing* R.C.). Let's see ! What can we do ? (*Very determined.*) We'll strike.

GIRLS. Yes, yes. Strike !

ALIX. What is strike ?

SALLY. But wait a moment. Have we the right to strike ?

ELISE. Of course, we have, my dear. Anybody—everybody can strike in this country. It's the law. I'm the head girl of this school, I suppose ? (*Coming forward, turning round.*)

GIRLS. Of course you are !

ELISE. Am I to act as your leader in this matter ?

GIRLS. Yes, yes !

ELISE. Very well, then. You just listen to me.

(GIRLS *take up positions on the stage, and* ELISE *goes to desk* L.)

First, of all, put a sentry on the door. Go on, Mabel—sentry-go !

(MABEL *takes a heavy ruler from desk and stands at the door like a soldier.*)

Now, girls. We've got to make a quick decision in this matter.

(*Murmurs of applause.*)

We've got to teach this old gentleman a lesson.

(" Hear, hear ! ")

This is a case of direct action——

(" Ah ! ")

and I hope and trust that all you girls will support me loyally.

(*Cheers.*)

And whatever decision we come to, there must be no back-sliding. No blacklegs, do you understand ?

Girls. Of course not!

Elise. Right! Well, we've had enough of all this nonsense and we're not going to have this old gentleman coming down here and messing about with our good school. So I propose that we strike.

(*Cheers.*)

The strike to take the form of forthwith returning to our homes.

All. Oh!

Sally. Here—half a minute! What will our parents say to this? (*Goes to sofa* L., *kneeling.*)

Elise. Oh, don't meet troubles half-way, Sally! We can explain that to them when we get home; now, are you game?

(*Shouts of* "Yes!")

Is it to be a strike?

Girls. Yes! Yes! Yes! (*And cheers.*)

Muriel (*rises*). Second the motion.

Girls (*to* Muriel). Sit down!

(Muriel *sits.*)

Elise. You have heard the motion—all in favour——

Sally. Let's——

Girls (*ad lib.*). Aye.

Elise. Contrary. It is carried. Treasurer's report?

Girls (*to* Muriel). You're the treasurer—get up, etc.

Muriel (*rises*). I'm not the treasurer.

(Lillian *slides down to far end of bench as* Muriel *rises.*)

Sally. Sure you are, Muriel.

Muriel. Oh, am I? (*Steps forward* L.C.) Well, we haven't any money.

Elise. Absolutely none, Muriel?

Muriel. Where would we get any from?

Elise. Very well. If there is no objection I will accept the treasurer's report as read.

(Muriel *goes to upper end of bench.*)

Now the object of this meeting?—Oh, I forgot—— (*Officially.*) Is there any unfinished business to come before the meeting?

Ethel (*sitting upper end of bench*). I don't even know what that is.

(Elise *raps on desk for order, then raps* Sally *on head for laughing.*)

Elise. If not, we will take up the question for which the meeting was called. Girls, shall we all go home?

Girls (*ad lib.*). Oh, yes, sure. Yes—yes, etc.

Sally. Yes-s-s.

Muriel (*to* L.C.). I don't mean to stay here.

Elise (*rapping on desk*). Oh, girls, do be more parliamentary. You're such a bad example to the younger class meetings. Will some one please make a motion ?

Muriel (*crosses front towards* R.). I move we go.

Elise. Any discussion ?

(Muriel, *as she is crossing* R., *gestures* "*I'm going, anyway.*")

If not, are you ready——

(Sally *gets up.*)

Oh, gee-whiz, Sally, are you going to make a speech ?

Sally. Yes, I am.

(Lillian *swings around on the bench, facing* R. Girls *talk ad. lib.*)

Ethel. Oh, Elise, don't let Sally make a speech.

Elise. She has a perfect right to, if she wants to. What is it, Miss Boyd ?

(Sally *bows to* Elise, *clenches her hands, makes grimace at* Ethel. Elise *raps on desk.* Sally *stands* L.C., *gestures—spread-eagle style.*)

Sally. Well, I think this, that we must really stick together—not back down, you know. If we decide to leave—and, of course, that's what we're going to decide—we must stick to it whatever happens. We must make our parents and teachers and this old fellow who's coming feel that our decision is ir-re-*voc*-able.

Muriel (*stands front of desk* R.). Hear, hear, ir-re-*voc*-able.

Sally. We are like that man in American History who said : "We must all hang together or we shall all hang separately."

Muriel (R.C.). Question !

Girls. Question—question !

Elise. Ready for the question ? It has been——

Mabel. Look out, girls ! Miss Hayes ! (*She puts down the ruler.*)

(Girls *dash to their places* R. *and look demure.* Elise *comes in front of desk* L. *Enter* Miss Hayes *door up* L.C. *She comes* C.)

Miss Hayes (*comes down* L. *of* Sally). What is this ? A senior meeting ?

(*The* Girls *all rise as they see* Miss Hayes, Lillian R.C., Madge *at sofa* R., Muriel *front of desk* R., Alix *front of sofa* R.)

Elise (*front of desk* L., *with dignity*). Miss Hayes, we have just reached an important decision. We shouldn't have reached it, Miss Hayes, if you had been left in charge, but we understand that Mr. Bevans has arrived——

Sally (r. *of* Miss Hayes). And that he's going to teach us to be charming.

Miss Hayes. How did you hear that?

Sally (*pompously*). Bad news travels fast.

Miss Hayes (*pleased*). Do I understand you girls do not approve of that method of education?

Omnes. Certainly not!

Elise. No, indeed, Miss Hayes. We mean to strike—we mean to go home.

Miss Hayes (*as usual, calm*). To go home! Well, girls, I think you had better tell that to Mr. Bevans himself.

(*The others rather shrink at this, but* Elise *is undaunted.* Sally, Lillian, Ethel *join the other girls—they group at and below sofa* r.)

Elise (*front of sofa* l.). I ask nothing better. (*She joins the other girls.*)

(*The* Girls *talk it over, do not see* Peter *at first as he enters.* "I'll tell him," *etc.* Miss Hayes *goes towards door up* l.c., *and calls to* Peter.)

Miss Hayes. Will you come here a moment, please?

(Peter *enters.* Miss Hayes *is between him and the* Girls. Peter *is followed by* Miss Curtis. *She now plainly worships him. She goes* l. *of desk* l. Miss Hayes r. *of post* l.c.)

Mr. Bevans, you said just now that if any little problem arose in the school——

Peter (*front of post* l.c.; *very bland*). Yes, I remember.

(Elise *turns to* Peter.)

Miss Hayes. A little problem has arisen. In fact, the seniors have decided to go home in a body.

Peter. Go home in a what?

Miss Hayes (*shouts*). In a body.

Peter. Why?

Miss Hayes. They will tell you themselves. Girls, this is Mr. Bevans!

(*The* Girls *give various cries.*)

Sally. Ye gods!

Alix (*front of sofa* r.). Oh, la, la!

(*Others ad lib., except* Elise, *who throughout the scene stands silently* r. *devouring* Peter *with her eyes.* Peter *has a moment of weakness.*)

Peter (l. *of* Miss Hayes). Oh, don't you think, for the present, Miss Hayes, it would be better if you dealt with this sort of thing?

Miss Hayes. No, indeed. This is essentially a problem for the head of the school. It is not easy to be the head of a school, Mr. Bevans. (*She moves towards the staircase.*)

PETER (*starts towards her*). But you're not going to leave me, are you ?

MISS HAYES (L. *of staircase*). I'm sure you're quite competent to deal with your own problems your own way.

(*She goes upstairs smiling.*)

(*The telephone rings on desk* L. MISS CURTIS *answers it.*)

MISS CURTIS (*in 'phone*). Who—oh—it's for you, Mr. Bevans.

(PETER *looks from* ETHEL *to* ELISE, *not quite sure of himself, while the* GIRLS *all watch him intently.*)

PETER (*to* ELISE—*recognizes her as the girl he met yesterday*). How do you do ? (*Crosses to above desk* L., *takes 'phone.*)

(ELISE *goes to front of post* L.C. *The* GIRLS *listen eagerly.*)

(*Behind desk at 'phone.*) Oh, hullo——

(ELISE *is leaning against post* L.C. MURIEL *goes to piano.* ETHEL *goes to piano bench—sits.* SALLY *stands* R.C.I. ALIX *sits on sofa* R. MADGE *stands front of desk* R. LILLIAN *stands* R. *of* MURIEL *at piano.*)

Is that you, George ? Where are you ? At the station ? Good. What's the matter with the school bus ? Oh, go to thunder. Use your legs ! I say, walk—yes, walk. (*Listens a moment in 'phone, his expression changes to one of disapproval—shakes his head, at 'phone. He hangs up receiver.*) My legal adviser and my accountant will be here at once.

MISS CURTIS (*standing* L. *of desk* L., *below* PETER). Oh, isn't that a comfort ?

SALLY (*turns to* MADGE, *sotto voce*). More men !

PETER (*to* L. *of desk ; turns to the* GIRLS, *picks up paper knife*). Now, young ladies.

GIRLS (*very eagerly*). Yes, sir. (*All rise.*)

PETER. Please be seated.

(*The* GIRLS *all sit down.*)

(*Taps on desk with paper knife, " attention "*). I understand from Miss Hayes that you are all leaving, is that it ? (*Looks at* MURIEL.) Come here——

ETHEL (*is sitting on piano bench ; she leans forward, " smitten at first sight." Simpers*). Me-e !

PETER (*to* MISS CURTIS). What do I call them ?

MISS CURTIS. *I* call them by their Christian names.

PETER (*finally indicating* MURIEL, *who is standing front of piano*). What's that one's name ?

Miss Curtis. That is Muriel Doughty.

Peter (*sitting* L. *of desk* L.). Come here, Muriel.

(Muriel *goes to* L.C. Sally *sits piano bench.* Ethel *turns, facing* L.)

Now, Muriel, why are you leaving?

Muriel (R. *of upper end of sofa* L.). Leaving! (*Looks at* Girls—*undecided*). Oh—I did intend to leave, Mr. Bevans—but, if you don't mind——

Elise. Blackleg!

Muriel. I've decided to stay.

Peter (*very serious*). Why did you change your mind?

Muriel (*opens her mouth with no answer coming; she pulls herself together and becomes very glib*). Oh, I didn't think I was being perfectly truthful with my parents in not letting them know that the school wasn't being perfectly well managed—but I didn't think of my duty to my school—my school, at which I have been so long—and which has taught me all I know——

Sally (*rises; to* Muriel). That's not much.

Elise (*louder*). Blackleg!

Peter (*taps on desk; to* Sally). Just a moment, young lady.

(Alix *moves and stands above* Ethel. Sally *sits front end of piano bench.*)

Muriel (*to* Sally). I do believe in being loyal. (*To* Peter.) And so I have decided to stay. Loyalty is so important.

Peter. That will do. Sit down.

(Muriel *goes* L. *of* Lillian *front of piano.*)

(*Indicating* Alix.) And this young lady?

Miss Curtis. This is Alix.

Peter (*to* Alix). Alix.

(Alix *comes to up* R. *of sofa* L., *curtsies.* Peter *starts to rise, but recovers himself.*)

You are leaving us?

Alix (*unable to express herself in English*). Yes, sir! No, sir! I did, I mean, I was, I had, I mean—I——

Miss Curtis (*tapping a chair with pencil*). Parlez français, Alix.

Alix (*in very rapid French with many gestures*). Enfin oui, monsieur le professeur, il est vrai j'avais l'intention de quitter l'école, mais apres y avoir réfléchi, j'ai changé d'avis. Bien zut.

(Peter *doesn't understand a word.*)

Miss Curtis. Of course, you understand French, Mr. Bevans?

Peter (*weakly*). French?

SALLY (*stepping forward*). Sit down, Alix, he doesn't understand a word.

(PETER *rises, taps on desk.* ALIX *sits on piano bench upper end.*)

MISS CURTIS. This is Sally Boyd.

PETER. George Boyd's sister.

SALLY. How do you do?

PETER (*freezes her; sits*). How do you do? You are leaving us, Sally?

SALLY. Well, Mr. Bevans—on thinking it over—— (*She stops.*)

PETER. Yes, on thinking it over?

SALLY (*pompously—gestures*). I see, Mr. Bevans, that I shall be quite content here.

(PETER *motions her away.* ETHEL *rises.* SALLY *goes to piano.* ELISE *looks at her a moment.*)

PETER (*indicates* ETHEL). And this young lady?

MISS CURTIS. This is Ethel——

(*As* ETHEL *rises and goes to* L.C. LILLIAN *sits on piano bench.* MURIEL *goes to sofa* R.)

PETER. Ethel—come here.

ETHEL (*simpering—and ready to cry for effect, wringing her hands*). Oh, I—I thought I couldn't stay—I loved your dear aunt so much—that when—she died—— (*She is overcome.*) But now I see that the best way of paying tribute to her memory—(*she breaks down*)—her dear memory—is to stay on and do the best I can for the school.

MISS CURTIS (*affected*). Oh, isn't that a beautiful thought?

PETER (*to* MISS CURTIS). There is great power of invention in the senior class, Miss Curtis. (*Points to her seat.*) Sit down.

MISS CURTIS (*shocked*). I know you don't mean it, but I fear you are giving the dear girls the impression that you don't believe what they say——

(ETHEL *goes to* R. *of* ELISE. MISS CURTIS *going up back of* PETER *to* L. *of post* L.C.)

Shall I—shall I dismiss them to their study now?

PETER (*rises*). No, I want to say a word to them first. (L. *of desk* L.) Young ladies——

GIRLS (*very quickly and eagerly*). Yes, Mr. Bevans?

(ELISE *is at post* L.C. MISS CURTIS *at* L. *of post* L.C. ETHEL *between* ELISE *and* SALLY; SALLY *at piano bench*; ALIX *sitting lower end of piano bench*; MURIEL *right end of piano bench*; LILLIAN *sitting piano bench*; MADGE R.C.)

PETER. Let me give you a piece of advice that you will find very

useful in future life. When you want people to believe anything that isn't true, don't be too terribly sincere about it, and above all, don't be so infernally glib.

Muriel (*standing* R.C. ; *with a look of innocence*). Mr. Bevans, I hope you don't mean that you don't believe us ?

Peter. Muriel, thank heavens, I have some common sense, and I know quite well that there isn't a word of truth—not one—in all you have been saying.

Muriel. Oh, Mr. Bevans !

Peter. Muriel ! I don't know what you have really been up to—why you wanted to go—or why you mean to stay. But it's all right. You're going to stay. Now, ladies, I'm going to say something rather more pleasant—something that may appeal to your feminine hearts. This uniform you're all wearing—I'm going to dispense with it. In future, you will be allowed to dress as you like—within reason. That will be all, Miss Curtis.

(Girls *ad lib. smother* " Oh ! ")

Miss Curtis. Come, girls.

(Miss Curtis *sends them out door* R., *closing the door.*)

(Elise *does not go off with the girls but holds her position at the post. She has never once removed her eyes from* Peter. Peter *looks at* Elise, *turns toward door* L. Miss Curtis *re-enters ; sees that* Elise *is watching* Peter *closely.* Miss Curtis *goes to* Elise, *touches her arm.*)

Elise, my dear !

(Elise *starts as though waking up.* Miss Curtis *motions her to go with other* Girls. Elise *crosses quickly to door* R.)

Oh, Mr. Bevans——

(Peter *comes down* L.C. Miss Curtis *is* L. *of piano.* Elise, *as soon as* Miss Curtis's *back is turned, slips up the stairs, hides out of sight until* Miss Curtis's *exit.*)

I'm so sorry to bother you, so soon, but would you mind seeing Sally and Muriel—they are so distressed—poor dears. You see, they feel you don't quite believe what they said, and they want to explain——

Peter (R. *of sofa* L.). No, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis (*surprised*). No ? But they only want to explain.

Peter. They're wonderful explainers. I must make a point of never seeing the girls individually. All such matters I leave to you and Miss Hayes.

Miss Curtis. Oh, how right you are, how right you are. They will be terribly dis—(*as she turns to go* R. *she stumbles over the piano bench in her confusion, crossing to door* R.)—tressed—poor dears, but

I'll tell them—— (*She goes off, shaking her head, murmuring at door* R., *turns to him.*) How right you are ! . . .

(Peter *goes to sofa* L. *As soon as* Miss Curtis *is gone,* Elise, *who has been hiding upstairs, comes down.*)

Elise (*coming* C.). Mr. Bevans, may I speak to you ?

Peter. No ! (*Turns toward door* L.)

Elise. I beg your pardon, sir, but did you say, did you say, No ?

Peter. Yes.

Elise. Just for a moment, please ?

Peter (*comes to above desk* L.). Anything you have to say to me can be said to Miss Hayes—or your parents.

Elise (*goes towards him a little*). But, sir,—I haven't any parents. I'm an orphan.

Peter. So am I.

Elise. Isn't that strange ? That we should both be orphans ? It's terribly lonely sometimes, being an orphan, isn't it ?

Peter (*lays coat and hat on sofa ; goes to* L. *of desk*). What was it you wished to speak to me about, Miss Challoner ?

Elise (*hurt*). Oh ! Mr. Bevans. (*Kneels on sofa* L.)

Peter. What's the matter ?

Elise. You called Ethel and Muriel and Sally by their Christian names.

Peter (*with his hand on the desk, leans slightly forward. Convicted of making a difference*). Yes, I know—but I seem to have forgotten what your Christian name is.

Elise (*leans forward*). Elise.

Peter. Oh——

Elise. Won't you please say it for me ?

Peter (*softly*). Elise.

Elise. Oh, thank you so much. Isn't it a pretty name ? I never knew how nice it was before.

Peter (*severely*). Elise, what was it you wished to speak to me about ?

Elise (*moves away* C.). Oh ! This. The reason I changed my mind about staying at school.

Peter (L. *of desk*). You had made up your mind to go, too ?

Elise. Yes—but I changed it——

Peter. Because you thought it more loyal ? Or because you wished to pay a tribute to my dear aunt's memory ?

Elise. Why are you so cross ?

Peter (*coming slightly towards her*). Good gracious, I'm not cross !

Elise. You're always cross.

Peter. Always ?

Elise. Yes, you were cross yesterday when you made my uncle send me back to school. (*Crosses him and sits on sofa in front of desk* L.)

Peter. That was my duty. (*Coming to* Elise.)

Elise. It wasn't.

Peter. I say it was my duty, young lady.

Elise. Do you always do your duty?

Peter. I hope so. (*Turning away.*)

Elise. But do you?

Peter. Well, perhaps not always.

Elise. Then why did you do it yesterday?

Peter (*awkwardly; goes* R.). I suppose it was one of my good days.

Elise. I don't think I like you on your good days.

Peter. Now look here, young lady, I'm not here to be cross-questioned by you. To me, you're just one of the pupils, and you must conform to the rules that I make, and—er—er—do as the other girls do.

Elise. I don't know that I want to do that. (*Rises and comes* C.)

Peter. But you've got to do it.

Elise. Have I?

Peter. Yes.

Elise. Do as the other girls do?

Peter. Yes.

Elise. But they've been telling you fibs.

Peter. I know that.

Elise. And you want me to do the same as they do? Well, you see, I don't want to do it. I want to tell you the truth, and the truth is that we made up our minds to strike and go home to our parents because we thought the school was going to be run by a fat old gentleman with a very loud voice, and some comic ideas about girls.

Peter. And when they found they were wrong, and that the new principal was not fat, they changed their minds?

Elise. Yes, they changed their minds. I suppose they thought you looked rather nice, and all that sort of rot, and as it was no use my striking all by myself, I changed my mind, too.

Peter. Because I look nice?

Elise. Oh, *I* don't think you're nice. You could be nice, but you won't let yourself be. You can't be nice if you never smile.

(Peter *smiles.*)

That's better, Mr. Bevans.

Peter. Now, look here—— (*Checking smile.*)

Elise. I suppose—(*pause*)—you want to be popular with the school? I suppose you want us all to love you?

Peter. That's the very thing I don't want you to do! Nobody must love me. What I hope you will do after a little time is—well, I hope you will respect me.

ELISE. Fiddlesticks!
PETER. Fiddlesticks——?
ELISE. Yes, fiddlesticks!

(*Enter* MISS CURTIS, R.)

PETER (*going to* L. *of desk* L.). Now, I shall punish you.
MISS CURTIS. Oh!
PETER. Let me see, what are the punishments in this school—fifty Latin lines, or what? (*To* MISS CURTIS.)
MISS CURTIS (*in front of desk*, L.). Please don't talk of punishing Elise. She's one of our very best girls.
PETER. I'm sorry for the rest of them! (*Sits at desk.*)
MISS CURTIS. She's one of our dearest girls.
ELISE (*coming* C.). Oh, don't bother, Miss Curtis. He doesn't think so.
MISS CURTIS. She has only one or two minor faults. Her handwriting is not always very legible, and her spelling is on the weak side——
PETER (*severely*). I'm very sorry to hear that. All my girls must write a legible hand. If you can't spell you can be no friend of mine.
ELISE. Oh, dear! I've got to learn to spell, then?
PETER (*rising; severely*). Try not to be impertinent to the Principal of the School, Miss Challoner. (*Sits.*) Let me see, I said I'd have to punish you, didn't I? Yes. . . . Your penance will be, having regard to the fact that you cannot spell, every day for the rest of this term, you will write a letter to Miss Curtis and she will make the necessary corrections and return it to you.
MISS CURTIS (L. *by desk*). Oh, no, no! Not me, please! Mr. Bevans, I'm not a mistress here, I'm only the school secretary.
PETER. Then write it to Miss Hayes.
ELISE. Oh, Mr. Bevans, would you mind if I write it to you instead of Miss Hayes? You would be much more severe than Miss Hayes, and I'm sure I should *learn* a *great deal* more if I wrote to you.
PETER (*to* MISS CURTIS). There can be no objection to that, I think?
MISS CURTIS. Oh, none whatever, Mr. Bevans.
PETER. Very well, then, Miss Challoner—write it to me, and I will correct your notes and return them to you.
ELISE. What shall I write about, Mr. Bevans?
PETER. Anything that you may be thinking—anything that may appeal to you—art, music, sports—in fact, anything.
ELISE. Or anybody?
PETER. Yes. Or anybody—why not? Now that's quite understood, and you will let me have a letter every day, and the punishment starts to-day.

(ELISE *goes* R. *to fireplace.* MISS HAYES *enters—down the stairs* R.)

MISS HAYES (*coming to* C.). Well, Mr. Bevans, have you solved your little problem?

PETER (*who has forgotten all about it*). What? Oh! the strike! Oh, that's all finished. (*Laughing.*) They've called the strike off. I think the funds must have been rather low. (*Meaningly at* ELISE.) So the master has won, for a change.

(MISS HAYES *looks disappointed, catches* ELISE'S *eye, motions her to go upstairs.*)

(ELISE *catches* PETER'S *eye and exits upstairs.* MISS HAYES *watches her off.*)

MISS CURTIS (C.). Oh, Eleanor, I wish you could have heard Mr. Bevans. The moment he spoke to the girls they knew they had been disloyal.

MISS HAYES (L. *of piano bench; disgusted*). You mean, they all backed down? (*Moves towards* R.)

MISS CURTIS. At once—oh, they were a wee bit afraid of Mr. Bevans—say what you will.

PETER (*crossing slowly towards* C.). I understand you're not much of a believer in men, Miss Hayes.

MISS HAYES (*coming back to* C.). I'm not a blind admirer of your sex, Mr. Bevans.

MISS CURTIS (*going down* L.). But I do think that girls will listen to a man sometimes when they wouldn't listen to another woman.

PETER (L. *of* MISS HAYES). Exactly. Those are the ideas on which our new plans were founded.

MISS HAYES. Our plans? *Your* plans, Mr. Bevans.

PETER. Do you mean that you are not in sympathy with my ideas of education?

MISS HAYES. The idea that girls should be taught to be charming? Certainly not. (*Crossing to* R. *of desk* R.) They think too much about it already. In fact, Mr. Bevans, I may as well be quite frank with you, I don't approve of your presence here at all.

MISS CURTIS. Oh, Eleanor—please don't say that.

MISS HAYES (R. *of desk* R.). I believe it will ruin the school, and if you will take that statement as my resignation, why——

PETER. No, I won't. (*Crossing to* R.C.) I don't want you to resign. Mr. Johns and I are fully agreed that you should remain—as second in command.

MISS HAYES. Mr. Johns? Was this all Mr. Johns' plan?

PETER (*trying to be flattering*). Mr. Johns thinks very highly of you, Miss Hayes.

MISS HAYES. Oh, does he, indeed?

Johns (*voice heard outside door* L. *He enters, shouting, comes down* L. *of piano bench*). Well—how much longer am I to be kept kicking my heels in there? Come on, Bevans——

(Peter *moves up* C.)

—I want to be getting back to town. (*He suddenly thinks he'll try it once more with* Miss Hayes.) Oh, Miss Hayes, before I go, could I have just a word with you about the general policy of the school?

Miss Hayes (R. *of desk* R.). I have nothing to do with the general policy of the school, Mr. Johns, I am only second in command.

Johns (*crossing to sofa* R.). If you would just let me say a word to you in private——

Miss Hayes. Say it to the gentleman you have selected for the head of this school.

Johns. But that's just it, you don't understand!

(Miss Hayes *turns from him. Enter* George *door up* L.C., *wearing an overcoat.* Johns *turns up* R.C.)

George (*comes down* R. *of* Peter). Peter, did you know how far it is from here to the station?

Peter (R.C.). Miss Hayes, this is my head bookkeeper, Mr. Boyd. And Miss Curtis.

George (*bowing*). How do you do?

Miss Hayes. How do you do?

(George *goes* L. *Enter* David *door up* L.C.)

David. Oh, it's far too hot a day for such a walk!

Peter. Oh, Miss Hayes, allow me to present to you my legal adviser, and our future history master, Mr. Mackenzie—Miss Hayes—Miss Curtis.

David. How do you do?

Miss Hayes. How do you do?

(*The* Twins' *voices are heard off.* David *goes* L. *Enter* Jim *and* Tim *door up* L.C.)

Jim *and* Tim (*coming down* L.C.). Oh, there you are, Peter!

Peter. Who told you to come?

Jim. We simply had to come, Peter. We're out of a job, and we can't run the flat, and you must give us a job.

Peter. I can't give you a job.

Jim. You've got to, Peter. We don't want any money for it, but if you give us some work——

Peter. You've placed me in a very awkward——

(Jim *goes up* c.)

Oh, Miss Hayes, allow me to present to you Mr. Timothy Bradbury, our new sports instructor. Miss Hayes—Miss Curtis.

Tim. How do you do?

Miss Hayes. How do you do?

(Tim *backs slightly and sits on sofa in front of seat* l. Jim *comes down* c.)

Peter. Oh, Miss Hayes, there's just one more—Mr. James Bradbury, our—our dancing master.

Miss Hayes. Dancing master!

Peter. Yes, dancing master—Miss Hayes—Miss Curtis.

Jim. Cheerio!

Miss Hayes. How do you do? (*Goes up* c. *to* Johns.)

(*Enter* Sally r. *She is very excited.*)

Sally. Oh, Mr. Bevans, Mr. Bevans! The gardener's broken out again, and he's chasing the cook all over the paddock! Something dreadful will happen if he catches her! Do send some assistance!

Peter. Good gracious, what's all this?

Sally. Oh, send somebody, please, Mr. Bevans!

Peter (*referring to* Tim *and* Jim). Here, you two—there's a job for you right away. Just go and see to this matter, will you? But don't use any unnecessary force.

(*Great commotion on the stage.* Miss Curtis *almost faints in the arms of* David.)

(*She is helped off the stage by* David *and* George, l.i.e. Sally, Jim *and* Tim *rush off* l.u.e., *followed by* Johns *and* Miss Hayes.)

(Peter *goes up stage and watches them off. As he does so* Elise *runs downstairs. Then* Peter *turns, sees* Elise, *and walks down quietly to her.*)

Peter. Well?

Elise (*handing letter*). My first letter, Mr. Bevans.

Peter (*opens letter*). Oh, yes—of course!

(Peter *reads the letter in the* c. *of the stage. Portions of the letter puzzle him. Other parts amuse him. Finally he walks quickly to the desk* l., *takes a blue pencil and makes very emphatic alterations and corrections.*)

There are two l's in respectfully, Miss Challoner.

(Elise *exits rapidly up staircase.*)

Curtain.

Scene II

Same as Scene I. *Two weeks later.*

(*The* Boys *are in, waiting for* Peter *There is a gardenia on his desk in a prominent position* Tim *is at the piano playing softly ;* George *looks at watch, then at door* L.)

David (*sitting on sofa* R. ; *rises, goes to* L. *of post* L.C., *glancing at watch*). I wonder what's keeping Peter ?

George (*sitting sofa* L.). I have a class in ten minutes. (*Takes out a cigarette case.*)

David (*coming to* C.). George, no smoking in study hours.

(George *puts it back.*)

I've a terrible lot of work on that history course of mine (R. *of desk* R. ; *sits.*)

George. History course ! I thought you had given it up.

Jim (*leaning against* R. *of piano*). He give it up ? Not much ! It's the girls who are giving it up.

David. The poor things are not accustomed to working their minds. They send a delegation to Peter every day to ask to be allowed to drop it.

Jim. That's funny ; my dancing class is simply crowded. It's the personality of the instructor that really counts, David.

David. You go to hell !

Jim. David ! David ! Will you kindly remember where you are.

David. Then don't exasperate me. I'm doing my best with an impossible situation. The reason your class is more popular than mine is that girls would rather use their feet than their heads.

Tim (*boastfully ; crossing to desk* R.). Well, look at my special lectures—one hundred per cent attendance, and last week there wasn't an empty seat——

David. Aye—but many empty heads.

(Muriel *and* Ethel *enter, coming downstairs* R., *each carrying her history paper.*)

Muriel. Good morning, Professor.

David. Good morning, young ladies.

Muriel (*to* Boys). Good morning.

Boys. Good morning.

George. Good morning.

Muriel. My history paper, Professor.

David (*taking paper*). Thank you.

Muriel. You're quite welcome.

(*Goes up and to door* R. Tim *opens door. She exits.*)

Thank you, Professor.

Ethel. Good morning, Professor.

David. Good morning.

Ethel (*to* Boys). Good morning.

Boys. Good morning.

George. Good morning.

(Ethel *hands paper to* David.)

David. Thank you.

Ethel. It's a pleasure.

(*Goes to door* R. Tim *opens door for her. She exits.*)

Tim. Did you ever see girls so improved ?

David. Improved ! Oh, my word.

Jim. Isn't it beautiful ? Do you see the effect we're having on the girls at this school ?

George. All, except poor old Sally.

Tim. Oh, it would be a pity to change Sally.

George. Pity ? Why, you couldn't do it.

Tim. What ?

George (*rises*). Oh, well, Sally's all right, but she isn't much to look at.

Tim. Not much to look at ! Why, you poor fish——

George. You don't think her good-looking, do you ?

Tim. I certainly do.

(Jim *sits sofa* L.)

Jim. Oh, don't talk to him. He's the girl's brother.

George. Speaking of improvement, have you noticed Miss Curtis ?

Tim. Did you ever see anything as alluring as Miss Curtis ?

Boys. Oh, Miss Curtis ! Oh, Lord !

(*They all laugh in a good-natured way.*)

David (*with great indignation*). I consider Miss Curtis is a charming woman and a very sensible woman.

(Miss Curtis *enters downstairs. She is very tastefully dressed and her hair is quite beautifully done. She has a bunch of flowers in her hand. She is very bright and a complete contrast to the last scene.*)

Miss Curtis. Good morning, Professor.

Omnes. Good morning, Miss Curtis—etc.

(JIM *rises, goes to sofa* L. DAVID *half rises, tries to look at her around* GEORGE, *who is standing in between them.* MISS CURTIS *also tries to look at* DAVID.)

DAVID. Good morning, Miss Curtis.

(GEORGE *looks at* DAVID, *then moves up* C.)

MISS CURTIS. Good morning. (*Comes down* L. *of desk* L., *looks with disfavour at the gardenia.*) Does this gardenia belong to any of you gentlemen?

(BOYS *shake their heads. She takes it out of its bowl; crosses and lays it on upper end of piano.* TIM *picks it up, shows it to* GEORGE *and places it on lower end of piano.* JIM *goes up towards door up* L.C.)

It has such a heavy, disagreeable perfume, I always think. I'm sure Mr. Bevans can't like it.

GEORGE. I notice it's there every morning.

MISS CURTIS (*crossing to* L. *of desk*). Yes, I always take it away.

(JIM *to* R. *of post* L.C.)

GEORGE. He always brings it back.

MISS CURTIS (*sighing*). Yes, I believe he does.

GEORGE (*more pointedly*). I wonder where it comes from.

MISS CURTIS (*tossing her head*). I haven't the least idea. Some silly girl, I suppose. (*At the head of desk* L., *puts her own flowers in the bowl.*)

GEORGE (*looks at wrist watch; going to sofa* L.). I don't think he has any right to keep us waiting like this.

MISS CURTIS (*pleadingly*). Ah, our dear Principal has so much on his mind, so many calls on his time and attention, that really sometimes I don't see how he gets through the day.

(PETER *enters door* L.; *goes to* L. *of desk* L.)

PETER. Good morning, Miss Curtis. (*Then looks at the* MEN.)

OMNES. Good morning, sir.

PETER (*very business-like and quick*). I'm sorry to keep you waiting, gentlemen. I wanted to get a report from the doctor. Miss Hayes was afraid we had a scarlet fever case.

MISS CURTIS. Oh!

PETER. But it turned out to be nothing but indigestion. (*Sits* L. *of desk* L.)

MISS CURTIS (*moves to sofa* L.). Oh, wasn't that fortunate——

PETER. That will be all for the moment, Miss Curtis.

(MISS CURTIS, "*crushed,*" *crosses and exits door* R.)

(TIM *goes slowly towards* R.U. JIM *sits at piano, slowly hitting the same low key.* PETER'S *eye begins roving about, looking for gar-*

denia. He sees it on the piano, he crosses front, gets the gardenia. Tim *stops striking the key. The* Boys *all watch* Peter *as he returns to his desk* L., *placing the gardenia on the desk. He does not put it back in bowl. The* Boys *exchange knowing glances, except* David.)

Peter. And now, gentlemen——

(Men *rise.*)

—just a word with you, if you'll kindly come nearer the desk.

(Jim, Tim *and* George *move to oblique line in front of desk.* Jim *and* Tim *look nervous.* George *resentful and jealous.* David *stands* R.)

(*Sitting on settee in front of desk.*) Which of you has been taking a pupil to the pictures?

Jim. I—er—I think I can explain that.

Peter. That's why I'm here.

Jim. Well, you see, I have a theory. I may be entirely wrong, but still I have it. I feel that the pictures are one of the great modern methods of education, and when I found one of the pupils had never been to the pictures—I——

George. Now where can you find a girl that hasn't been to the pictures?

Peter. Don't interrupt.

Jim. I thought it was my duty to take her.

Tim. Same here. I didn't think a clever girl like Sally ought to grow up——

Jim. Sally? Was Sally the girl you took?

George. Sally? And did she tell you she'd never been to the pictures? Why, she's been regularly, ever since she was born.

Peter. I should think you fellows could see that it isn't fair to me. (*Goes to chair behind desk.*) It's so cheap to behave like that. That's just what every one would say would happen. Turn five men loose in a girls' school, and they'd all be making love to the pupils.

David. Leave me out of this.

Jim *and* Tim. Yes, but Peter——

Peter. Oh, I know you didn't mean any harm, but that sort of thing must not happen. By heaven, it shan't!

(George *crosses* Jim *and* Tim *to front of desk.*)

George. You're pretty hard on these chaps. How about yourself? How about these continual flowers on the good teacher's desk? Not those over there on the piano—I don't mean those! I mean this one. The gardenia——

Peter. I don't know where they come from.

George. You haven't happened to notice any of the pupils who wear——

Peter. No. I don't notice that sort of thing.

Jim. Well, perhaps I can enlighten you. So let me tell you.

Peter. Jim, you have more important jobs than to stand here gossiping about flowers. Tim, the new tennis court needs rolling. Jim, there's a telegram from Lucile. I want you to wait, George.

(George *goes behind* Jim *and* Tim *and sits on arm of sofa.*)

Tim (*to* Jim). I didn't know you took Sally to the pictures.

Jim (*to* Tim). When did you take Sally to the pictures ?

(Jim *and* Tim *exit up* L. David *starts to go and stays* L.C.)

Peter. You wait, too, David. Now, I don't want to be unjust to George——

(Peter *moves over to* C.)

George (*sitting on arm of sofa* R. ; *rises quickly*). Unjust to me ? What have I been doing ?

Peter. George, you hang about the halls whenever Elise Challoner is changing classes.

George (*at front of sofa* R.). Well, suppose that I do.

Peter. Well, that isn't right. I know you're in love with her, and Heaven knows it's natural——

George. Do *you* think it's natural to be in love with her, too ?

Peter. Yes—no ! You didn't let me finish. What I meant to say was, that being in love with her, it's natural that you should want to speak to her. But you mustn't. It's breaking the pledge you gave me when I offered you the job. Isn't it, David ?

David (*at desk* L.). In my opinion, it is.

George. What do you suppose I came here for at all but to see Elise ?

Peter. To see her—to be near her, but not to speak to her.

George. Well, I hardly spoke to her ; I just said, " Oh, Elise, won't you marry me ? "

Peter (*too much interested*). And what did she say ?

George (*smiling happily*). She said, " Oh, George, don't be tiresome ! "

Peter (*relieved*). Now, don't you see how wrong that is ? I consider it a point of honour with all of us not to have the least personal communication with any of the pupils——

(*Enter* Miss Curtis *downstairs. She has a letter in her hand.*)

None ; do you understand ?

(George *starts to speak.*)

None !

Miss Curtis (C.). Excuse me for interrupting, but this is Elise's letter.

George (*turns quickly and moves down* R.). Elise's letter!

Peter (*coldly*). Put it on the desk, please.

Miss Curtis (*crossing to desk* L., *and laying the letter on the desk*). Yes, her daily letter. She's so punctual about it, dear child. Every morning at nine it's always, "Miss Curtis, will you give this to Mr. Bevans, please?" She never misses——

Peter. That will be all, Miss Curtis——

Miss Curtis (*starts to take the gardenia*). Mr. Bevans, wouldn't you like me to take that gardenia away?

Peter. That will be all, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis (*crosses to* R.C.). Such a heavy perfume. I didn't know but it might give him——

(*Exit upstairs.*)

—a headache——

(Peter *moves to* L. *of desk* L. George *watches* Miss Curtis *up a few stairs, then moves over quickly.*)

George (*to sofa* L.). No personal communication with any of the pupils, eh?—Oh, no! It would be so wrong!

Peter (L. *of desk* L., *takes the letter, starts to open it*). This is an exercise in English composition. (*Sits.*)

George (*turns to* C.). Ha!

David (*above desk* L.). Yes, I can tell from her history papers that her writing, spelling, and punctuation are very defective.

George (*angrily, to sofa* L.). Are they, indeed? Well, I never found them so. I think her letters are perfect—only she hardly ever writes to me. (*To* Peter.) But to you she writes every morning—every morning—at nine o'clock.

Peter. George, you don't mean you doubt my word when I tell you that this letter is merely an English exercise?

George (*turns to* L. *of* C.; *back to audience*). Of course, I doubt it.

Peter (*hands letter to* David). Read it, David. Out loud.

David (*reading*). "Dear Mr. Bevans: Did you see the moon last night?"

George (C.). Ugh!

David. "It came out suddenly from a black cloud with silver edges." (*Speaking.*) Now that's prettily put.

George. With a silver lining, I suppose?

David (*reading*). "It must have shone in at your window. I watched it a very long time, and hoped that you were not missing such a very lovely sight."

Peter (*calmly, looking front*). She uses "very" too often.

David (*reading*). "You can't imagine how my love of poetry has increased in the last few weeks. We are reading Shelley now, and some of his lines ring in my head day and night. 'I never thought before my death to see youth's vision thus made perfect.'"

George. Didn't she? (*Goes to sofa* R.)

David. "I say that over and over to myself. Respectfully yours, Elise."

George. *Elise!*

David. Now, I call that a very fair letter—though she should not spell hope with two p's.

Peter. Make a note of it, will you?

(David *takes pencil from desk* L., *makes note on letter.*)

George. Why, it's a love letter.

David. Why, man, you're crazy. There isn't a word of love in it.

(Peter *rises, takes the letter, looks at it.*)

George (*to sofa* L.). Isn't there? Can't you read between the lines? Don't you see when she says, "Youth's vision made perfect," she doesn't mean me!

David. Of course not!

George. No—she means Peter.

Peter. George, don't be absurd.

George (*at* R. *end of sofa* L.). And what about the moon? You don't talk about the moon unless you're in love or balmy.

(*Enter* Miss Curtis *downstairs.*)

Miss Curtis (*comes* L.C). Oh, excuse me for interrupting you again, Mr. Bevans, but Professor MacKenzie's History-class has been waiting fifteen minutes——

(David *crosses.*)

—and they're getting so impatient.

David (*crossing quickly to door* R.). Impatient for my course. Do you hear that, Peter?

(*Exit door* R.)

Miss Curtis. And Professor Boyd's class in book-keeping is waiting also.

George (*glares at* Peter, *gathers up papers from desk and mutters*). Moon! Moon! Perfect visions of youth! (*Then goes out after* David, *door* R.)

(Peter *stops* Miss Curtis, *who has started for the door.* Peter *comes* L.C. Miss Curtis *goes to his* R. *He puts the letter in breast pocket.*)

Peter. Miss Curtis, when Mr. Boyd gives his individual instructions in book-keeping you are always present, aren't you?

Miss Curtis. Oh, yes, yes—indeed, I'm always there.

Peter. What is his procedure?

Miss Curtis. Once a week he gives a lecture on the general theory, and then he takes each girl aside for about ten minutes and shows her how to balance her bank book, or to draw cheques. Such a helpful course, I always think.

Peter. Where has he been giving it?

Miss Curtis. In my little office.

Peter. In the future I prefer to have him give it here. Will you please tell him that with my compliments?

(Miss Curtis *goes to door* R., *turns, looks at him; smiles, exits.* Peter *goes up to* R. *end of sofa* L., *picks up gardenia and stands looking at it.* Elise *enters down the stairs, wearing a gardenia.*)

Elise. Mr. Bevans——

Peter (*upper end* R. *of sofa; very severe*). Now you know perfectly well it's against the rules for you to come here like this.

Elise. Yes, I know, sir, but—do you like gardenias?

Peter (*firmly*). No.

Elise. No?

Peter. The perfume is too heavy.

Elise (*goes to end of sofa* R., *throws it into waste-basket*). There, then!

Peter (*hides his in drawer of desk* L.). Now, Elise, you must go. (*Sits* L. *of desk* L.)

Elise (*crossing to sofa* L.). But, Mr. Bevans, I want to speak to you about my letter.

Peter Your letter?

Elise. Didn't you receive my letter this morning?

Peter. Oh, yes, I believe I did. (*Pretends to look for it on the desk.*)

Elise. Perhaps you put it in your pocket.

Peter. Yes, perhaps I did. (*Goes through his breast pocket, and at last reluctantly produces it. He takes the letter out and reads it.*)

(Elise *watches him out of the corner of her eye.*)

Elise. Oh, Mr. Bevans—don't you think that is a wonderful line? (*She recalls.*) "I never thought before my death to see youth's vision thus made perfect."

Peter. Yes, I suppose it's quite a good line. He was a very clever chap—I mean Shelley, of course, is acknowledged to be one of our greatest poets—yes—and—er—I think you'd better go now.

(Elise *goes to bottom of stairs and returns to settee front of desk.*)

Elise. Do you suppose that's the way every one feels when they fall in love?

Peter. Will you please go to your class?

Elise (L.C.). Just one moment, Mr. Bevans. Don't you think Shelley is a wonderful poet?

PETER (*rises*). Leave this room.

ELISE (*runs to and sits on sofa* R.). Just a moment—just a moment, please.

PETER (*coming* C.). Elise, you must go.

ELISE (*rising; very sweetly*). Well, you can't exactly put me out, can you?

PETER. Why can't I? I will, too, if you don't go yourself.

ELISE. Well, I'm not going myself, am I?

PETER. All right, then——

(*Puts his hands on her shoulders to push her out. The door opens quickly, pushing* ELISE *into* PETER'S *arms; he catches her to save her from falling.* GEORGE *hurries in, sees* ELISE *in* PETER'S *arms, and throws ledger on floor above sofa* R. *Stands glaring at them.* PETER *unconsciously still keeps his arms about* ELISE—*not holding her to him but his arms are rather awkwardly outstretched.*)

What—what do you mean by breaking into a room like that?

GEORGE (*front of stairs; sarcastic*). I'm very sorry, but, of course, I thought you were alone.

PETER (*realizing his position, angrily crosses to down* R. *of desk* L.). Why the deuce should you think I was alone?

(ELISE *crosses to piano.*)

GEORGE (*picks up ledger; crossing to* R. *of desk* R.). Because you said—because I understand—because it's against the rules to see pupils alone——

PETER. You don't seem to understand that you nearly knocked this young lady down—bursting open the door like that.

ELISE (C., *with a lovely smile*). Oh, I don't mind what happened.

(GEORGE *shuts the account book he carries "bang," glares at them.* ELISE *startled, sits on piano bench.*)

PETER (*in front of desk* L., *turns to* GEORGE). What are you doing here, anyhow?

GEORGE (*in front of desk* R.). What am I doing here?

PETER. Yes.

GEORGE. You sent for me——

PETER. Eh?

GEORGE (*front of desk* R.). You sent Miss Curtis to tell me to give my course here——

PETER (*irritably*). Oh—hu—— (*Sits* L. *of desk* L., *picks up book.*) All right, go ahead with your course.

GEORGE. Here before you?

PETER. Certainly. Is there any reason why you shouldn't give it before me?

GEORGE (*crossing to sofa* L.). No. *I* have nothing to conceal.

(Miss Curtis *enters door* R. *with composition books, goes to* R. *of desk* R.)

Miss Curtis. Hurry, Sally!

(Sally *enters door* R. *with a small cheque-book—goes to* R. *of piano.* Elise *rises, turns, sits on piano bench; starts playing softly.*)

Peter. Oh, is it only Sally? I mean, is Sally taking the first private lesson?

Miss Curtis (*sits at desk* R.). Yes, Sally has the first turn.

Peter (*rising and going up* L.C.). Oh, well, I've got something to attend to—but I'll be back.

(Elise *is sitting on piano bench, catches his eye as he comes up* L.C. Peter *exits door* L.)

(Elise *gets his last words, "I'll be back"—swings around on the bench and softly touches the keys. Stops when* Sally *begins to speak.* George *crosses to* L. *of desk* L.)

George. Now, Miss Boyd!

Sally (*laughs loudly, making fun of* George). Professor! (*Crosses to sofa* L.; *sits sofa* L.) Oh, come off it, George!

Miss Curtis. Sally! Have some little respect for your professor!

Sally. I can't separate the Professor from the brother, and one can't have any respect for one's brother, can one?

Miss Curtis. Sally, Sally!

Elise. Go on . . . punish her!

Miss Curtis. Elise Challoner!

Sally (*handing* George *the book*). There you are, old thing. Let's get it over.

George (*runs through the pages rapidly*). A very badly kept book, Miss Boyd.

Sally (*mock demurely*). I have such trouble with my account, Professor.

George. What is your chief difficulty?

Sally. Keeping any money in the bank.

Miss Curtis (*sitting desk* R., *busy writing; gently*). Oh, Sally, Sally dear, do pay attention to your lesson.

George. I'm sorry to hear that. (*Sits; sotto voce.*) Listen to me. When I teach Miss Challoner——

(*He points at* Miss Curtis, *at the door, meaning "When I teach Elise, get Miss Curtis away."*)

Sally (*loudly*). What's that?

George. Oh! (*Turns away disgusted; to* Sally *again.*) When I teach Miss Challoner—— (*Same business.*)

Sally (*understanding*). Oh, I can't.

George. You could if you tried.

Sally. Can't.

Miss Curtis. Sally, Sally, you must never say you can't do anything your teachers ask of you.

Sally. All right, if *you* say so, Miss Curtis.

George (*rises, rapidly*). In that case, this lesson is over. Add up the deposits, add up the cheques, subtract the one from the other, and there you are.

(Sally *goes off upstairs.*)

(*Very sweetly.*) Now, who is the next pupil, Miss Curtis?

Miss Curtis. Elise, Elise—Elise Challoner is next.

George. Possibly, possibly. (*Sits.*)

Elise (*going to* L. *of sofa* R.). Miss Curtis, I don't see any use at all in my taking this course. My uncle would always find me some little accountant to balance my book!

George. Perhaps you wouldn't always find a little accountant at your beck and call.

Elise (R.C., *turns to* George, *then turns back to* Miss Curtis). I always have.

(George *sits crushed.*)

Miss Curtis. Mr. Bevans thinks this course is so important.

Elise (*crossing and sitting down at once on upper arm of sofa* L.). Oh, if Mr. Bevans thinks so.

(*They sit together.*)

George (*looking through her book*). Tsh—tsh—tsh—this is not quite right—to self—to self—to self—why, you never enter what you spent your money on.

Elise. Sometimes I do. (*Finds the place in the cheque-book.*) There's one—for George's Christmas present——

George. It was a wonderful present.

(*Sentimentally; tries to hold her hand; she snatches it away.*)

I mean it must have been at such a price.

(*Enter* Sally, *downstairs, goes* L.)

Sally (*excitedly*). Oh, Miss Curtis!

Miss Curtis. Yes, Sally dear?

Sally. You're wanted on the telephone. Trunk call. No, not on that one—on the office one.

Miss Curtis. Dear me, dear me. (*To* George.) You must excuse me a moment!

Sally. Hurry, Miss Curtis, or you'll miss it.

Miss Curtis. Now, what can it be?

(*Exit* Miss Curtis R.)

Sally. Thank me, Elise.

(Elise *shakes her fist at her.*)

Make the most of your time, Georgie!

(*Exit* Sally *upstairs.* Elise *starts after her.*)

Elise. I think I'd better go.

George (*passionately*). Elise! Elise!

Elise. What do you want?

George. Can't you see that man is in love with you?

Elise (*gasping*). Oh, George, what do you mean?

George (l. *of* c.). Bevans is in love with you, don't you see it? Can't you feel it?

Elise (r. *of* George). Oh, George, what makes you think so?

George. I don't think, I know. If you'd seen his face just now when you were in his arms——

Elise. Oh, I wasn't in his arms, George. It was because you opened the door so roughly.

George. The point is, he liked it. He loved it.

Elise (*enraptured*). Are you sure?

George. Of course I'm sure. I've known Peter a long time; I tell you he's wildly in love with you. That's why he makes you write to him every day.

Elise. Oh, no, George, that's to improve my handwriting.

George. That's what he tells you, darling, but it's really because he's in love with you. Why, you should have seen his face light up when Miss Curtis brought in your note this morning.

Elise. Did it, George, did it light up?

George. Yes, it did.

(Elise, *enraptured, turns to* r.c. George *follows her.*)

He ought to be ashamed of himself. Why, he's practically engaged to Susie Rolles.

Elise (*laughs, sits on arm of sofa* r.). Practically engaged—what sort of an engagement is that?

George. Well, I heard him tell your uncle that the only reason he took the school was to make enough money to get married. He's all wrapped up in her.

Elise. But how can he be all wrapped up in her, if he's in love with me?

George. What do you mean—he's in love with you?

Elise (*rises, goes to him*). You just this moment said he was.

George (*confused*). Well, I mean he was wrapped up in her and he would be still, if you'd let him alone.

Elise (*shocked*). Let him alone! Why, George! (*Crossing to* l. *of desk* l.) You don't think *I'd* do anything——

GEORGE (*hastily*; *front of sofa* L.). Oh, no, no, dear. I didn't mean that. I know you are too timid to give him the least encouragement. But if you (*gestures*) wouldn't stir him up——

ELISE. Stir him up?

GEORGE (*gestures*). If you'd just avoid him for a little while.

ELISE (*struck with the idea, looking front*). Oh! I might do just one thing and then the other—— (*Imitates* GEORGE'S *gestures.*) First stir him up and then avoid him. That sometimes works wonderfully.

GEORGE. No, no, dear. Just avoid him, just avoid him, then he'd forget you.

ELISE (*laughs*). Oh, George, you are so funny. That's what I do with you—and look at the result——

(GEORGE *turns to* C.)

You never give me back a balance sheet without writing "I love you" all over it—— (*Gets it, on desk* L.) Like this one this morning—look all over this side—— (*She hands it to* GEORGE.)

(PETER *enters door* L. *as the paper is under discussion.*)

PETER (*comes down* L.C., *between them*). Let me see that paper.

GEORGE (L. *of* C.; *shoves it up under his coat*). No, I won't.

PETER. Give it to me.

GEORGE. I will not.

PETER. George!

(GEORGE *slowly hands it to him.*)

(*Reading.*) "I love you so much that I cannot bear him even to look at you!"

ELISE (*front of sofa* L.—L. *of* PETER). Now, who do you think he means by that *him*, Mr. Bevans?

PETER (*looks from* ELISE *to* GEORGE; *to* GEORGE). Is this your idea of a lesson in accounting?

GEORGE (C.). About as good as your idea of a lesson in composition.

PETER (*crossing in front of desk* L.). You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

ELISE. Oh, Mr. Bevans, don't be so angry. It really doesn't make the least bit of difference.

PETER. There I disagree with you.

(MISS CURTIS *enters door* R.; *goes* R. *of desk* R. GEORGE *goes up to post* L.C.)

MISS CURTIS (*talking as she enters*). There wasn't a soul on the line and they kept saying "Number, please. Number, please." So annoying.

Peter (*portentously advancing to* C.). Miss Curtis,

(Elise *sits on sofa* L.)

I believe I made myself perfectly clear a moment ago when I told you that I wished you to remain in the room during Mr. Boyd's lessons.

Miss Curtis. Oh, yes, Mr. Bevans, perfectly clear.

Peter. You understood my directions?

Miss Curtis (*almost in tears*). Perfectly—perfectly.

Peter. May I ask, then, why I find you absent during this tuition?

Miss Curtis. I was called away for a trunk call.

Peter. But the telephone is here.

Elise (*to* George). Tell him it wasn't her fault.

George (*coming down* L. *of* Peter). Look here, Peter, it wasn't——

Peter (*hardly waits for* Elise *and* George's *lines*). Miss Curtis, I feel a very deep responsibility in these matters. Unless you can obey my directions, I must find some one who can.

Miss Curtis. Oh! (*Sinks into seat at desk, head in her hands, weeping.*)

Elise (*going to over* R.). Oh, Mr. Bevans, you mustn't be angry with her, it wasn't her fault.

Peter. Whose fault was it, then?

Elise. It was George's. He'll explain it. (*Goes to door* R., *opening it.*) Don't cry, Miss Curtis, Mr. Boyd will explain.

(*She leads* Miss Curtis *away; they exit door* R. George *goes down* C.)

Peter (L. *of desk*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself—after all I said to you——

George. Indeed. Well, how about you?

Peter. I wasn't making love to the girl.

George. It looked like it.

Peter. Because I'm alone with a girl for five minutes I'm making love to her? Is that it?

(George *cannot answer.*)

But I catch you in the act of sending her love messages. I've warned you already, and I won't have it, George. You leave my school.

George. And leave you a clear field.

Peter. Now, seriously, George, if I should find that one of these girls was developing a sentimental attachment for me, I'd stop it like a shot.

(ELISE *enters door* R.; *she goes straight to* R. *of* GEORGE.)

ELISE (*to* R. *of* GEORGE, L. *of* C.). George, go away for a minute.

PETER (L. *of* GEORGE). Do nothing of the kind, George.

ELISE. George, if you don't go instantly, I'll never speak to you again—I want to speak to Mr. Bevans.

(GEORGE *goes out at once door* R. ELISE *advances to* PETER.)

PETER (*angry; front of desk* L.). Yes, and I have something to say to you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—head girl of the senior class. You ought to set a good example to the younger pupils. What I object to is that it's so common—it's so second rate——

ELISE. Don't be silly.

PETER. *Silly!*

ELISE. Yes, what difference does it make whether George writes me letters or not? *He* doesn't matter. I—I don't care for him.

PETER (*front of desk* L.) It's no affair of mine whether you care for him or not. But it is my affair that you shall not use my school to carry on a clandestine correspondence. (*Crossing to front of desk* R.) It makes no difference to me what your feelings are——

ELISE (*gasping, goes to* L. *of sofa* R.). Oh, is that true?

PETER (*turning to her, front of desk* R.). Is what true?

ELISE. That you don't care what my feelings are. (*Pauses and looks at him.*) Do you mean that?

PETER. Do I mean that? What is the matter with you, Miss Challoner?

ELISE. Can't you—see?

PETER. Are you afraid of me?

ELISE. Terribly—terribly afraid of you, but—er—that's not the matter now.

PETER. Then what is the matter?

ELISE. Do you really want to know?

PETER. I insist on knowing!

ELISE. I—love you.

PETER. You—love me?

ELISE (*looking straight at him*). I love you.

PETER (*recovering himself*). But, my dear child——

ELISE (*almost shouting*). I'm *not* a child! I'm a woman. I'm nearly nineteen. So please don't call me a child. (*Sits down again.*) I have so little time to tell you all I want to tell you. I have so little time to tell you that George does not matter—that nothing matters but you, and that I'm not enjoying it a bit. . . . I'm very unhappy and I think you might have noticed it.

PETER. But, Elise——

ELISE. I can't eat, or sleep. When I'm away from you, I'm unhappy, and when I'm with you, I am—miserable.

PETER. Elise!

Elise. What am I to do?

Peter. Just wait a minute, please. (*Walking up and down,* R. *of desk* R.)

Elise. Do you hate to be loved?

Peter (R. *of desk* R.). Now let me be quite honest about this. Nobody hates to be loved. And no man hates to be loved by a lovely little creature like you. As for me, no one's ever cared about me much, except David and my mother, and I don't remember her very well——

Elise (*at sofa* R.). Oh, I'm glad to hear that.

Peter. But we're not going to have anything more like this at all. You've got to get over this fancy, and get over it at once.

Elise. Mr. Bevans, when I'm an old, withered woman, I shall love you just as I do to-day.

Peter (*crossing to* L.C.). Nonsense.

Elise (*goes to his* R.). Or a little bit more, because I'll know more about it then.

Peter (*turns to her*). Elise, you must stop loving me.

Elise (R. *of* Peter). I can't.

Peter (L. *of* C.). You can if you try. Now try.

Elise (*gaspingly*). I don't mean to try. (*Tearfully*). Don't you love me at all?

Peter (*firmly, untruthfully*). No.

Elise. Are you engaged to some one else?

Peter (*attempting to quiet her*). My dear child, what difference can that possibly make to you?

Elise (*frantically*). Can't you see what difference it makes to me? Are you? Are you? Are you?

(Miss Hayes *enters door* R., *takes in the situation.*)

Peter. Well, not exactly.

(Elise, *sobbing hysterically, goes up and leans her head against post* L.C.)

Miss Hayes (*above sofa* R.). There are two ladies to see you, Mr. Bevans.

Peter (*to* L. *of desk* L.). Parents?

Miss Hayes. No, just ladies—— (*Comes down* C.)

(Elise *gives a long sob.* Miss Hayes *goes to* L. *of sofa* R.)

Peter (*to her* L.). Elise, do try and control yourself.

Elise (*hysterically*). I don't want to control myself. (*Runs upstairs, sobbing hysterically.*)

(Miss Hayes *looks after* Elise; *turns, looks at* Peter. *Pause.*)

Miss Hayes (R.C., *scornfully*). Well, Mr. Bevans, it seems that charm is like a good rule, it works both ways.

PETER (*goes towards her*). Miss Hayes, it wasn't my fault.

MISS HAYES. Oh, don't say that.

PETER (C.). You mean you think I wanted to—that I tried——

MISS HAYES (R.C.). When you introduced five young men into a girls' boarding school you took the responsibility of everything that might happen. You were obstinate and ignorant——

PETER. Miss——

MISS HAYES. Oh, I know that determined and inexperienced sounds better; in other words, you were a man and a young one, and so you went on your own way—and you ruined this school—this thing for which I worked and thought and planned for fifteen years. You take it up like a toy and break it for your own amusement! (*Sits on sofa.*) Without a thought.

PETER. You're quite wrong. I've given it a great deal of thought——

MISS HAYES. I gave the best years of my life to building it up. And I love it, like a child—and I've had to stand aside and see you do one mad thing after another. Mr. Bevans, give it up. Give it up to me now. I can still save it.

PETER. Why, the school is doing well. Look at the results. Look at the waiting list. My aunt never had a waiting list like that. Isn't that true?

MISS HAYES. Oh, yes, that's true.

PETER. All the parents are satisfied, and the girls are certainly very happy. Look at them. Judge honestly for yourself. You must admit that we have made great strides under my régime.

MISS HAYES. I don't deny that some of your ideas are good, and have proved more practical than I expected.

PETER. What do you object to, then?

MISS HAYES. To you, and these other boys. Do you know how easy it is to kill a school? One breath of scandal——

PETER. Of scandal?

MISS HAYES. What parents call scandal. I dare say you don't know half of what is going on in the school. Do you know that those twins—what is their names, Bradbury—send Sally flowers every day? That George Boyd follows Elise about like a little dog? That every girl in school is taking snapshots of you—and that a good photograph of you commands quite a price.

PETER (*turning to* L.C.). I'll confiscate every kodak in the school. It will be forbidden to take a picture.

MISS HAYES. It's too late—they all have them on their dressing tables in silver frames.

PETER (*comes to* C.). You must order them off their dressing tables.

MISS HAYES. Oh, I've worried myself sick over the whole thing, and I can't bear it any longer. I resign, I can't stand by passively and see things like this going on.

Peter. Like what?

Miss Hayes. Like what is happening to little Elise, for instance.

Peter. Miss Hayes, I am just as eager to put that matter right as you are. You almost make me feel as if the whole thing were my fault.

Miss Hayes (*rises*). I'm afraid I can interest myself very little in your feelings, Mr. Bevan.

(*Exits* R.)

(*Enter* Miss Curtis *downstairs. She has a letter in her hand.* Peter *goes to* L. *of desk* L.)

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Bevans, excuse me, I thought Miss Hayes was here. I have a letter for her.

Peter (L. *of desk* L.). Miss Hayes will be back, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis (*goes to* C.). Mr. Bevans, may I speak to you?

(Peter *crosses to* Miss Curtis.)

I feel that after what happened this morning, I had better resign.

Peter (L. *of* Miss Curtis). Resign! You want to leave us?

Miss Curtis. Oh, no, I don't want to leave you, but I thought you were dissatisfied with me, and I couldn't bear—— (*She can't go on with the sentence.*)

Peter. There, there. I suppose I was a little hasty. Do forgive me. We really couldn't do without you.

(Miss Curtis *ready to cry, smothers* "Oh, Mr. Bevans.")

Only please don't cry. (*She tries to keep back the tears.*) You won't cry, will you?

Miss Curtis (*smiles, crying bitterly*). I can't help it. It makes me so happy. Oh, Mr. Bevans, working for you has been such a privilege, such an inspiration. You know, I think I have been waiting for an inspiration all my life.

(Peter *goes to* L. *of desk* L., *sits.* Miss Hayes *enters* R.)

Miss Hayes (R.C.). Theodosia——

Miss Curtis (*going to* Miss Hayes's L.). Oh, Eleanor. I have a note for you from Elise.

(Miss Hayes *takes the letter, steps down* R.C. Miss Curtis *turns up and dries her tears, then goes to chair* R. *of desk* R., *sits.*)

Miss Hayes (*glances through the note*). Oh! (*Goes to* C. *Controlling herself.*) Well, Mr. Bevans. Your catastrophe has arrived. Elise Challoner has run away.

Miss Curtis (*rising*). Oh, Eleanor. (*Crosses front to* R. *of* Miss Hayes.)

PETER (*rises*). What, run away—— (*Goes to* L. *of* MISS HAYES.) Let me see—— (*Takes the letter; reads.*) "I couldn't bear to live another hour under the same roof. I shall be quite safe where I am going."

MISS CURTIS. This is terrible.

PETER. Nonsense! She can't have gone far. She was here not fifteen minutes ago.

MISS CURTIS. To think it should be Elise to bring disgrace upon the school.

PETER. I'll bring her back.

MISS HAYES (*coldly; crossing to* R. *of desk* R.). I hope you may.

PETER. I tell you I will. (*He goes to door* R. *and calls.*) David! George!

(*As* PETER *turns he almost runs over* MISS CURTIS. *He goes to door up* L.C.)

MISS HAYES. Her uncle must be telephoned at once. (*In 'phone.*) Hullo! Hullo!

PETER (*calls off door up* L.C.). Tim! Jim!

MISS HAYES (*in 'phone*). Hullo! Hullo!

MISS CURTIS (L. *of sofa* R.). Oh, no, don't telephone her uncle—he is so hard, so unforgiving.

PETER (*comes down* L. *of* C.). Of course, Mr. Johns must be informed instantly of what has happened.

(DAVID *enters door* R., *goes to* R.C.)

Miss Hayes, you'll stay and take charge of everything while I'm gone.

(JIM *enters door up* L.C., *goes down* R. *of* C.)

JIM. What's the matter, Peter, what's happened?

(TIM *enters door up* L.C., *goes to* L. *of* PETER.)

PETER. Boys, boys, I've got some bad news.

(GEORGE *enters door* R., *goes to between* DAVID *and* JIM. MISS HAYES *sits at desk* R., *takes the address book and looks up the possible places where* ELISE *might go, then writes out telegrams.* MISS CURTIS *is above desk* R., *helping her.*)

Elise Challoner has run away, and I'm going to bring her back——

GEORGE (DAVID *is below him*). What?

PETER. Elise Challoner has run away (*crossing to* L. *of desk* L.) and I'm going after her.

GEORGE (*crosses to sofa* L.). So am I.

(DAVID *crosses, above desk* L.)

PETER. No, you're not. Your place is here.

(*The* Twins *go to* Miss Curtis *and question her. She answers them, then goes to above desk* R. Twins *come to* C.)

George. I know my own place, thank you.
Peter. Prove it, then, by sticking to your job.

(Miss Hayes *replaces 'phone. Starts hunting the 'phone book and writing telegrams.*)

George. Stick here, and leave you to go chasing Elise all over the country. I'll go and get her, myself.
Peter. You know where she is, then?
George. No, but I have means of finding out.
Twins. Sally will know.
Peter. Good idea. Get Sally, please, Miss Curtis.

(Jim *runs to* Miss Curtis, *who runs upstairs.*)

Jim. Yes, get Sally, Miss Curtis. (*Comes back to* C.)

(Tim R. *of* C.)

George (L.C.). Now, that's not fair. Sally is *my* sister, and it was my idea——
Peter (L. *of desk* L.). Look here, George, this is a serious matter.
George. Why did she run away, that's what I'd like to know.
Peter. We don't know.
George. Well, I know.
Peter. What do you know?
George. Why she ran away.
Peter. *Why* did she run away?
George. I guess you know, too. Elise ran away because of you.
David (*above sofa* L.). George, you're crazy.
Peter (*to* David). Never mind him, David.

(David *exits door up* L.C.)

George. I'm not crazy. Elise ran away because you forced her to write you letters every day——
Peter. If you haven't anything more sensible to say than that, for heaven's sake, shut up. (*To* Jim.) Jim——

(Jim *goes to above sofa* L.)

—I want you to go to the station and find out——
George. I won't shut up. I say Elise ran away because you forced her to write you love letters every day.
Peter. They weren't love letters.
George. They were.
Peter. They weren't.
George. They were.

PETER. They weren't.
GEORGE. They were. (*Continued ad lib.*)
PETER. Oh, shut up.

(*To* JIM.)

Jim, you go to the station and find out if she's taken a ticket. The booking-clerk knows every one of our girls.
JIM. Yes, sir.

(JIM *exits up* L.C.)

PETER. Tim——

(TIM *goes to above sofa* L.)

—run around to the garage, and get my car up and see that the tank's filled.
TIM. Right-o!

(TIM *runs out up* L.C. SALLY *is seen at entrance on stairs, overhears.*)

PETER (*turning to* GEORGE). And, George, you get right out of here.
GEORGE (*backing towards* C.). I'll do nothing of the sort.
PETER. You leave this room, or I'll put you out.
GEORGE. You try, you just try.
PETER. That's exactly what I mean to do.
SALLY (*running down the stairs*). George!

(MISS CURTIS *enters after* SALLY, *goes to above desk to* MISS HAYES. GEORGE *goes to* SALLY.)

MISS HAYES (*to* SALLY). I shouldn't interfere, my dear.
GEORGE (L. *of sofa* R.). Sally, where has Elise gone?
PETER. You tell me everything you know.
SALLY (*goes to* PETER'S R.). Oh, I don't know, I don't know——
PETER (L. *of* SALLY). Sally, remember I'm head of this school.
GEORGE (*to* R. *of* SALLY). Sally, remember I'm your brother.
PETER. You're concealing something from me.
SALLY. Oh, no, Mr. Bevans.
PETER. If you don't tell me where she's gone you'll leave this school.

(SALLY *runs to* MISS HAYES. GEORGE *goes to above* SALLY.)

SALLY. Miss Hayes, Miss Hayes, you wouldn't let him do that?

(MISS HAYES *waves her off.*)

Oh, Mr. Bevans, I don't know, not positively, only Elise has an old nurse who's married and lives—in——
PETER *and* GEORGE. Where—where, Sally?
SALLY. In Bridgeport.

George. Bridgeport, Bridgeport. Here, where's the time-table ?

(*Runs out door* L. *Business with* Miss Curtis, *turns and bumps into her, exits.*)

Miss Curtis (*rushes to desk* L.). Oh, yes, I have one, I have one here.

Peter. But what's her name, Sally ? Stop crying. What's her name ?

Sally. M-M-Maggie.

Peter. Maggie ! But I can't go about Bridgeport asking for Maggie the nurse. What's her surname ?

Sally. Oh, you're upsetting me so I can't think, but I do think it's O'Brien.

Peter. Maggie O'Brien, Bridgeport. (*Hurries off door* R.)

(Sally *follows to above sofa* R. George *runs in door* L., *wearing his hat.* Sally *runs to sofa* L., *kneels, leaning over desk.*)

George (*to* C.). Have you found it, Miss Curtis ?

Miss Curtis. Yes, yes, here it is. What time is it now ?

George. What time is it now ?

Miss Hayes. Five minutes to one.

George (*looking at wrist watch*). Five minutes to one, Miss Curtis.

Sally. Five minutes to one, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis. Five minutes to one, five minutes to one, and here's one at one-six. Now if you hurry you can catch it——

(George *starts for door up* L.)

Oh, come back, Professor, come back, that train doesn't go to Bridgeport at all. But here's one at one-fifteen, a very good train that gets to Bridgeport at——

(George *again starts on a run for the door.*)

Oh, wait, wait a moment, Professor, come back, that's the Sunday trains I've been looking at all the time. Now wasn't that stupid of me, dear, dear. A.M. P.M.

(Sally *attempts to help her.*)

No, no, now, Sally, let me manage it ; I understand time-tables. I always did. Here it is, here's your train—one-twenty——

(George *again starts.*)

—an excellent train, doesn't stop anywhere.

(George *again returns to sofa* L., *sinks on it, tired out.*)

Miss Hayes. Theodosia, will you please go up to Elise's room and see if she has left any clue ?

MISS CURTIS. Oh, yes, indeed I will. Wasn't it stupid of me not to have thought of it before?

(*Exit upstairs.*)

(MURIEL, ALIX *and* ETHEL *enter* R. SALLY *joins them and explains the situation.* PETER *enters door* R.)

PETER (*to* MISS HAYES). I'll wire you from Bridgeport, Miss Hayes.

(TIM *enters door up* L., *followed by* JIM *and* DAVID.)

TIM. The car's ready, Peter. Do you want me to go with you?

PETER. Certainly not.

(TIM *exits door up* L.)

(*To* MISS HAYES.) I'm going in the car.

GEORGE (*rises,* L. *of* PETER). I'll go with you, Peter.

PETER (*crossing*). You will not.

GEORGE. All right, then. I'll go on the train and get there first.

(*Exit* GEORGE *into room* L.I.)

PETER. You'll get there first. We'll see. (*To* MISS HAYES.) I'll wire you from Bridgeport. (*To* JIM.) Come on, Jim, see me off. Come on, David.

(*All the other* GIRLS *enter.*)

DAVID. Oh, this is terrible, terrible, terrible!

(*Exeunt* PETER, JIM *and* DAVID, L.U.E.)

(*All the* GIRLS *on the stage begin to show signs of great distress. Sound of motor-car heard off. Enter* MISS CURTIS *downstairs.*)

MISS CURTIS. Oh, Eleanor, Eleanor, Eleanor!

MISS HAYES. Well, did you find anything in her room. (*Coming* C. *of stage.*)

MISS CURTIS. No, Eleanor, no. Not a thing.

(*All the* GIRLS *surround* MISS HAYES.)

MURIEL (*to* MISS HAYES). Has Elise really run away?

MISS HAYES. Young ladies, I cannot disguise the fact. Elise has run away.

(*At this point, the* GIRLS *are so arranged that they dress the whole of the stage, all concerned facing the audience, and at the cue given by* MISS HAYES: "Elise has run away," *they all burst out crying.*)

MISS HAYES. Well! Here's a damn fine thing!!!

CURTAIN.

ACT III

Scene I

Scene.—*On the road. In Front of the Returns of Act II setting, hangs a wood drop painted very dark grey. About ten feet of the centre of this cloth is cut out and gauzed, showing at the back the road through the woods. This backing may be Flats or a small cloth. The ceiling of Act II. has been raised. In the centre of the gauzed drop on a small rostrum stands an old-fashioned buggy. The shafts have been cut off to about nine inches of the cross-tree, and are close to the gauze. An iron standard comes up from the cross-tree over which are the reins. The top of the buggy is turned slightly back so as not to interfere with the lights. The buggy faces the audience. The horse is presumably in front of the picture, i.e. in the audience.*

The two side lights of the buggy are fastened to a board which in turn is attached to the dashboard . . . they are close together at first. A mechanical arrangement which Peter *works by turning a small crank slowly draws the lamps apart, at the same time opening the Kodak shutters which have shut out the light, giving the effect of a carriage coming straight ahead from a distance. Two very small lens lamps—lemon-coloured—come slowly up sufficiently to light the faces of the people in the buggy. When the curtain rises, everything is black out. It is midnight. Distant sound of a horse trotting slowly. Gradually the two small lights are seen, at first close together, then growing larger and drawing apart, while the horse effect is growing louder. The two lens lights are slowly brought up as the two front lamps get into their final positions. Then first border is brought up to blue at* ¼. *This border is to faintly light the sky on backing. A stage hand stands behind the buggy and each time* Peter *uses the whip or urges the horse, the man rocks the buggy sideways,* Peter *and* Elise, *who are seated in the buggy, swaying with the movement. The horse effect keeps slowing or quickening with the foregoing business.*

Time.—*Midnight.*

(*Discovered* Peter *and* Elise *seated in the buggy.* Peter *on* r. *of* Elise.)

The buggy scene was inserted after the piece had been played several weeks, and the entire scene, if advisable, can be cut out without any change in the dialogue of the succeeding scene. The only difficulty with the buggy scene is the arrangement of the lights; but if that can be overcome, it would be advisable to keep this scene in.

Peter (*to the horse*). Come on, now, gettup. To come down from forty horse power to one is a bit of a drop. Gettup?

Elise. The poor darling, he seems rather tired, doesn't he?

Peter. I have a fellow-feeling for him.

Elise. Are you tired, too, Mr. Bevans? Then why didn't you stay at the hotel? Though I think it's great fun to drive all night. Don't you think it's great fun?

Peter. Fun? To be wandering about Bridgeport where there seem to be three hundred Margaret O'Briens, and then to smash my car on that corner. . . . Fun?

Elise. Well, you were driving rather fast.

Peter. I was in a hurry to get you home.

Elise. I can't see why there was any great hurry.

Peter. You don't seem to care about the anxiety of your uncle and Miss Hayes.

Elise. You telegraphed to them that we were starting!

Peter. I wired them that we started from Bridgeport at nine o'clock. It is now well past midnight. We ought to have been home by half-past ten. I don't know what they'll think.

Elise. They know I'm with you.

Peter. Yes, they know that. (*To the horse.*) Gettup.

Elise. The man at the garage said if he could have worked all night he could have mended your car by six o'clock. I wish you'd let him do it. Then we could have stayed at the hotel, and you could have had your night's rest.

(Peter *groans at the suggestion.*)

Didn't you think it was a good hotel to stay in?

Peter. An excellent hotel.

Elise. Then why didn't you stay there?

Peter. Hotels do not as a rule put up two young people without luggage and more especially if they are not married.

Elise. But why not?

Peter. Because—because they think they ought to be at home and in bed.

Elise. Do you mean to say a hotel wouldn't take us in just because we're not married?

Peter. Yes, I do.

Elise (*laughing*). He was rather funny, though. Don't you remember, the hotel man thought we were married?

Peter. Did he?

Elise. Yes, don't you remember he said, "Wouldn't your wife like a cup of tea?"

Peter. I didn't hear him. (*Cracks whip, and the buggy lurches violently.*) Gettup! Come on, gettup!

Elise. We're going very fast.

Peter. We're going downhill.

Elise. Oh, that was a beautiful mistake the hotel man made!
Peter. Stupid mistake.

(*A rumble of thunder is heard off.*)

Elise. Mr. Bevans, I want to ask you a question.
Peter. Well, what is it?
Elise. I want you to give me your opinion. If a girl is in love with a man, do you think she ought to tell him so?
Peter. Certainly not. Reserve in a woman is her greatest charm. She ought to wait for the man to make the first advances.
Elise. But supposing she did wait and nothing happened?
Peter. She ought to wait a little longer.

(*Second rumble of thunder.*)

Elise (*a little afraid of the thunder*). Oh, dear! (*Pause.*) I am so sleepy.
Peter. Go to sleep, then. The horse has.

(Elise *looks at him, and then slowly puts her head on his shoulder.*)

Elise. Does this interfere with your driving?
Peter. Yes, it does.

(Elise *straightens up quickly.*)

Lean your head against the corner of the buggy there. You'll be quite comfortable.

(Elise *goes to the other corner of the buggy.*)

Elise. It's not very comfortable, Mr. Bevans.
Peter. Well, it's the best I can do for you.

(*Loud clap of thunder, and rain, and black out.*)

Curtain.

A very quick change to
Scene II

Scene II

Scene.—*Same as Act II.*

(David *and* Miss Curtis *discovered.* Miss Curtis *standing* c. *is in a very agitated state of mind.*)

David (*at 'phone*). Hullo!—hullo! (*Pause.*) Hullo!—hullo! Give me Trunks, please. (*Pause.*) Is that Trunks? I want the police station at Bridgeport. No, I don't know the number, but will you kindly get it for me. And will you please be as quick as possible, because we're all in a desperate state of mind here. (*Pause.*) What's that? You want my number? (*To* Miss Curtis.) What's our number?

Miss Curtis. Double-seven double-seven Westchester.

(Miss Curtis *moves to sofa* R. *and sits.*)

David (*in 'phone*). Westchester double-seven double-seven. And you'll hurry, now, won't you? Thank you very much.

(Miss Curtis *is now on the verge of tears.*)

Miss Curtis. Oh, I do hope everything will come all right, Mr. Mackenzie.

David (*going* R.). Now Miss Curtis, you must make your mind easy on that score. Elise will be all right. Elise is perfectly safe for the reason that Mr. Bevans is with her.

Miss Curtis. Oh, I'm not worrying about Elise. To be perfectly candid with you, Mr. Mackenzie—and I always like to be candid and truthful with everybody——

David. And I myself always make a point of being candid and truthful.

Miss Curtis. How delightful! As I said, Mr. Mackenzie, I am not worried over much about Elise. It is poor, dear Mr. Bevans. What is to become of his school? What is to become of his dear self?

David. There again you must not distress yourself unnecessarily. I have known Mr. Peter Bevans for many years. He is a man of character. He is a man of great strength of will. He is a man who, having once made up his mind to do a thing, invariably accomplishes it. Have no fear of Mr. Bevans, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis. Oh, it's a great relief to hear that. I was worrying about him. But you men are so strong—so wonderful—so different from us poor, frail creatures.

David. No, Miss Curtis, you're not frail!

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Mackenzie!

David. And I may say that I am very glad that this occasion offers of having a wee bit of a talk with you.

Miss Curtis. Oh! Mr. Mackenzie.

(*He fetches the chair from beside the piano, brings it to the* L. *of the sofa and sits.*)

David. I have been down here in the school now for the past nine weeks, and I've been watching you very closely.

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Mackenzie!

David. Aye, very closely, Miss Curtis. And I've come to the conclusion, after deep thought and long consideration, that you're a very sensible, highly intelligent, and if I may say so without compromising myself in any way, a very charming and delightful lady.

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Mackenzie!

David. Yes, yes, that's what I think. And as I said before I always like to be truthful, and that's the truth.

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Mackenzie!

David. Now, Miss Curtis, I would like you to give a thought to what I'm going to say to you. I want to tell you that I'm getting £150 a year——

Miss Curtis. A hundred and fifty pounds a year?

David. —And my keep. Now, before we go any further, I suppose you can cook?

Miss Curtis (*rather agitated*). I must disabuse your mind on that score. I cannot truthfully say that I am a good cook. Of course, I can make a very excellent cup of tea. I can boil an egg—three or four minutes, as the case may be—but——

David. But you'd be willing under certain circumstances to devote your mind to the subject—you'd be willing to practise?

Miss Curtis. Of course I would, Mr. Mackenzie, if it would be helpful in any way.

David. It would be very helpful, Miss Curtis.

(*Pause.*)

And now, Miss Curtis, I would like you to tell me in just a few words, what you think of me.

Miss Curtis. Oh, Mr. Mackenzie! You've taken me just a little bit by surprise! Oh dear, oh dear, what am I to say? What can I say, Mr. Mackenzie, but that I consider you are a very clever, a very dependable, and a sweetly kind man. I have been so exceptionally busy these last few weeks that I have really not had the time to think of you in any other light than one of our Professors. But now, that you have asked me the direct question, I can tell you truthfully, Mr. Mackenzie that I admire you—that I—that I—like you very, very much . . . oh, Mr. Mackenzie!

David (*rises*). That's a very satisfactory answer to my question. And now, Theodosia, I want to inform you that I've been making a few inquiries in the neighbourhood, and I find that there will be a wee cottage vacant on the school estate in about four months' time.

Miss Curtis. Oh, David!

(*Enter* Sally *downstairs.*)

Sally (*on the stairs*). Forgive me interrupting, Miss Curtis, but—has anything happened about Elise?

David (*to* Miss Curtis). You'll think over what I've been saying to you?

(David *moves a little* L. Miss Curtis *rises.*)

(*Pause.*)

Sally (*coming down* C.). Oh, do tell me, Miss Curtis! Has anything happened?

Miss Curtis (*in a dream*). Has anything happened? Has anything happened, child—oh, yes, indeed there has—something has happened—yes, Sally, my dear, something beautiful has happened!

('*Phone bell rings.*)

(*Exit* Miss Curtis R.)

David (*in 'phone*). Yes, double-seven double-seven Westchester. (*Pause.*) What's that? (*Pause.*) You can't get through to Bridgeport because the wires are down owing to the storm? Oh Lord! (*Hangs up receiver.*)

Sally. Have you heard from Elise?

David. Don't worry yourself about Elise—she'll be all right. Where's that woman?

(Sally *points to* R. David *runs off* R.)

(*Enter* Muriel *from up* L.C.)

Sally. Oh, Muriel, do you know anything new?

(*All the other* Girls *enter up* L.C.)

Muriel. Yes, and oh, my dear—even Miss Hayes is worried.

Sally. Tell me what it is?

Girls. Tell us, Muriel!

Muriel. Well, last night, after they had all gone to bed, Miss Hayes got a telegram from Mr. Bevans saying he had found Elise.

Girls. Oh, splendid! Ripping! *etc.*

Sally. Elise found? Oh, wonderful!

Muriel (*sitting on sofa* L.). And that he was leaving Bridgeport in the car—that was nine o'clock last night. (*Pause.*) Well, my dear—where are they?

Ethel. Good gracious! I wonder!

Muriel. I can tell you what Miss Hayes thinks.

Sally. What? What does she think?

Muriel. *She thinks they've eloped!*

Sally. Oh, I don't believe it!

Muriel. Do you think they would!

Girls. Oh, how lovely!

(*Enter* George *up* L.C. *He moves to down* L.C.)

(Girls *run to various observation posts.* Muriel *rises.*)

Sally. Oh, George, did you find Elise ?

George. Ha ! Can't you see I didn't ?

Muriel. Wasn't she in Bridgeport ?

George. I never got to Bridgeport.

Sally. Where did you go ?

George. Well, I started for the station, as you know, but a taxi-cab came along, and in the state of mind I was in then, I took it. We went on and on through the country, and when the clock had ticked up about two pounds two, I foolishly told the man that was about all I had. What do you think the blighter did ?

Sally. What, George ?

George. Dumped me down in the middle of a country road a thousand miles from anywhere. That was last night, and I've been walking ever since.

Sally (*putting her arms round him*). Oh, my poor old George !

George. Do you mind undraping yourself ? I'm far too weak for this sort of stuff.

(*Enter* David r. *He comes to* c.)

David. So you're back, George ?

George (*weakly*). Oh, yes, I'm back.

David. I suppose you know that Peter has found Miss Challoner ?

George. Where ?

David. At Bridgeport with her old nurse. They're on their way back now. They started at nine o'clock last evening.

George. In a train ?

David. No, in a car.

George. To do forty miles ?

David (*moving to* r. *a little*). It's all right, man.

George. All right ?

David. Yes, she's with Peter.

George (*following* David *to* r.). And you call that all right ? Elise . . . a lovely girl like Elise . . .

David. Hush, man, hush !

George. You talk as if Peter were different from all other men.

(*Enter* Johns *up* l.c. *He comes on like a whirlwind.*)

Johns. Where's Mr. Bevans ?

(Girls *move about in confusion.*)

(*Enter* Miss Curtis r. *She comes to* r.c.)

David (r.). Mr. Johns, you're interrupting us. I'm about to take my history class.

Johns. You teach girls charm here, do you ? You teach them to be damned nuisances.

Miss Curtis. Please remember the young ladies are present.

Johns. Do you think parents pay you to lose their children for them ? This is the very devil of a school.

Miss Curtis (*to* Girls). You'd better go, my dears. You'd better go.

(*Exeunt* Girls r. *They do not want to go, but* Miss Curtis *insists.*)

Sally (*the last of the girls to go off*). Did you hear him say damn ?

(*Exit* Sally r.)

David. It will be all right, Mr. Johns. Peter is bringing her back. He always does whatever he undertakes to do.

Johns. He undertook to take girls off their parents' hands, save them all trouble . . . and I have had to come back from a business trip because he mislays my niece . . . I repeat, sir, this is the very devil of a school ! (*He moves* l.)

(Miss Hayes *enters down the stairs. She moves to* r.c.)

Miss Hayes. I thought it was you. I thought I recognized the tone.

(*Enter* Jim, l.u.e.)

Jim. Miss Hayes, they've come back. Mr. Johns, Peter has brought Elise.

(Peter *comes on, pulling* Elise *by the hand.* Peter *moves to* l.c., Elise *to* c.)

Peter. Come on, you'll have to face it. There she is, Miss Hayes. I told you I'd find her.

(*Enter* Tim, l.u.e.)

Miss Hayes. Elise, my child. . . . Mr. Bevans, where have you been since nine o'clock last night ?

Peter. Driving, Miss Hayes. My car broke down, and I've been driving a slow horse for nearly forty-five miles.

(Peter *goes up to piano and takes off coat and cap.*)

Johns. What do you mean by careering over the country like this, young lady ?

(David *is extreme* r. *The* Twins *sit on settee* l. George *sits on settee* r. Miss Curtis *behind sofa* r.)

Johns. Well, have you nothing to say for yourself ? Do you realize what you've done ?

Elise. Perfectly, Uncle.

Johns. Are you not ashamed of yourself ?

Elise. Not a little bit. I don't consider I've done any harm.

Miss Hayes. What ?

Johns. Ah, I can see it's not much good talking to you to-day. (*Down* L.) So let me deal with Mr. Bevans. I suppose it is unnecessary for me to remind you of our compact ?

Peter (*down to* R.C.). Quite unnecessary, Mr. Johns.

Johns. And you realize that you've lost your school ?

Peter. Lost my school ?

Johns. Didn't I make it a condition that none of your pupils should fall in love with you ?

Peter. Yes, you did.

Johns. Well, one of your pupils has made a fool of herself over you, hasn't she ?

Peter. I suppose she has.

Johns. Very well, I hold you to the arrangement. I've decided to foreclose—take over the school—and put Miss Hayes in charge. This is the future principal of the Fairview School.

Peter. And do you think you have a right to do this ?

Johns. You know I have.

Peter. Legally you may have the right, but morally you haven't. This school came to me, and I put everything I had into it—time, energy, thought, and the little money I possessed. I've made it go. I've made it succeed. No one ought to have the right to take it from me.

Johns. I'll give you another job.

Peter. I don't want another job. I don't want to be bought off.

Johns (C.). I'm not trying to buy you off, but I need a man like you in my office. I'll make it worth your while.

Peter. I did not ask for a position. I'm not asking for favours of any sort or kind. I quite realize that I've lost in the game, and that you have won. In this matter I do not consider that I have been at fault, but I am sure that in a day or two, Miss Challoner will realize that she has placed me in a very awkward position. I do not propose to say anything further on the subject now. (*Coming* L. *of desk* L.) I will at once make the necessary arrangements for my departure, and I suppose you boys will have to come along with me. George, we'll have to go back to the flat.

(Johns *goes up* C.)

George. I'm with you, Peter.

(*The* Twins *rise.*)

Peter. Jim, Tim——

Jim. Oh, we'd love to go, Peter, but the governor's wired for us, and we have to go back to Bradford this evening. He wants us in his business. Absolutely perishing.

Peter. Lucky devils! I wish I had a father to look after me. (*To* David.) You're not going to desert me, are you?

David (*looking at* Miss Curtis). Well, if you don't mind, Peter, I'd like to stay on, that is if the suggestion meets with Miss Hayes' views.

Miss Hayes. I should be more than delighted to have you as one of our professors.

Peter. Anything that makes you happy, David, will please me, and now there's nothing further to be said. I shall take formal leave of the pupils in a day or so. (*Sits behind desk.*)

Elise (c.). Have you all done?

Johns. What's that? (*Comes down* r.c.)

Elise. I say "Have you all done?" Have you all done talking? If so, I have a word or two to say.

Miss Hayes. Elise, my dear!

Johns. Something in your defence I hope.

Elise. Oh, not at all, Uncle, but I can see so plainly that you are all making such a dreadful muddle of this business.

Johns. What?

Elise. I can make things so right if you will only let me have my little way, and I promise you you will all be so pleased and happy if you will let me arrange things, but to do that I shall want five minutes alone with Mr. Bevans.

(David *and* Miss Curtis *exit* r. George *goes upstairs.*)

Johns. Well; considering you've had ten hours alone with him, another five minutes cannot possibly do any harm.

(*The* Twins *exit* l.)

(Miss Hayes *and* John *exit* r.)

Elise (*on the* r. *side of sofa* l.). Well, Mr. Bevans, we are alone! Have you anything to say?

Peter (*rises and moves down* l.). Nothing whatever, Miss Challoner, I have spoken my last word on the subject.

Elise. What a dreadfully obstinate man you are!

Peter. I? Obstinate?

Elise. Yes. Obstinate.

Peter. Good gracious! I am the easiest thing in the world. Look what your uncle has done with me—he has twisted me round his little finger.

Elise. You are *very* difficult to manage.

Peter. Difficult to manage. What do you mean?

Elise. Why did you refuse the position that my uncle offered you?

Peter. Really, Miss Challoner, I am not prepared to give you my reasons. This is a personal matter.

Elise. Exactly! And it is because I take such an interest in you that I have decided to accept that position on your behalf.

Peter. But——

Elise. Mr. Bevans, I have decided for you. It would be so much better for us. (*Moves to* L.C.)

Peter. Us?

Elise. Will you come here, please?

Peter (*moving to her a little*). What exactly does all this mean?

Elise. Come—along nearer.

Peter (*still nearer*). Well, this is the limit.

Elise. Yesterday I told you a very important thing. I told you that—I loved you. Now I am going to tell you something else—something that you know perfectly well yourself, but that you won't admit—I am going to tell you that you love me.

Peter (*moving away*). Indeed I do——

Elise. Come here, Mr. Bevans—nearer. Now say "I love you."

Peter. Indeed I shall not.

Elise. You *will*. Say it, Mr. Bevans.

Peter. I shall not.

Elise. Say it, Mr. Bevans.

Peter. No.

Elise. Say "I love you"—Peter—Peter—Peter.

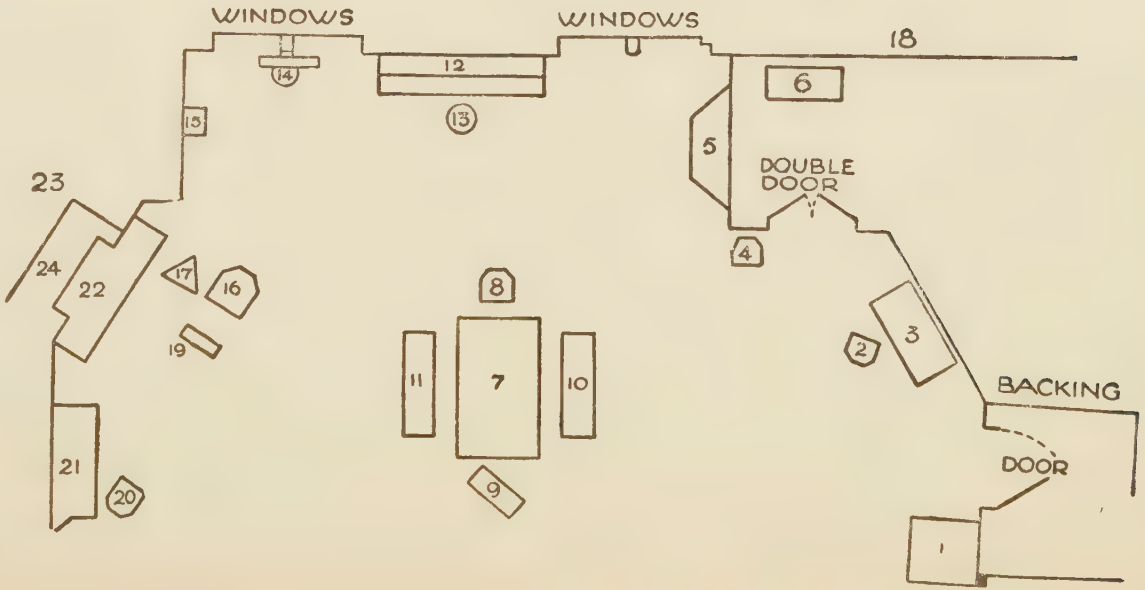
(Peter *hesitates. His arms go forward and after a pause he takes* Elise *in his arms.*)

Peter. You ought to be well smacked!

Curtain.

ACT I.

HOUSE TOPS BACKING



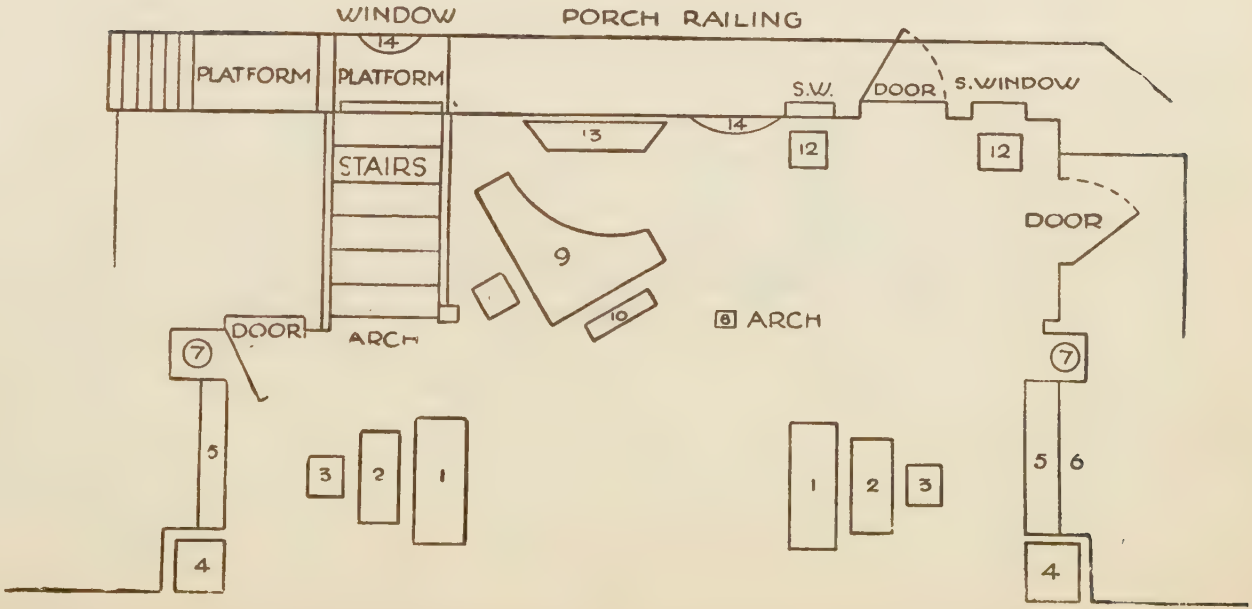
ACT I.

KEY.

1. Armchair.
2. Small chair.
3. Deck chair.
4. Small chair.
5. Bureau and 'phone.
6. Dumb waiter.
7. Table.
8. Small chair.
9. Small bench.
10. Bench.
11. Bench.
12. Piano.
13. Piano stool.
14. Music rack.
15. Small table.
16. Easy chair.
17. Small table.
18. Kitchen backing.
19. Stool.
20 Small chair.
21. Desk.
22. Fender and fireirons.
23. Fireplace backing.
24. Fireplace.

ACTS II AND III.

BACKCLOTH OF TREES IN BLOOM

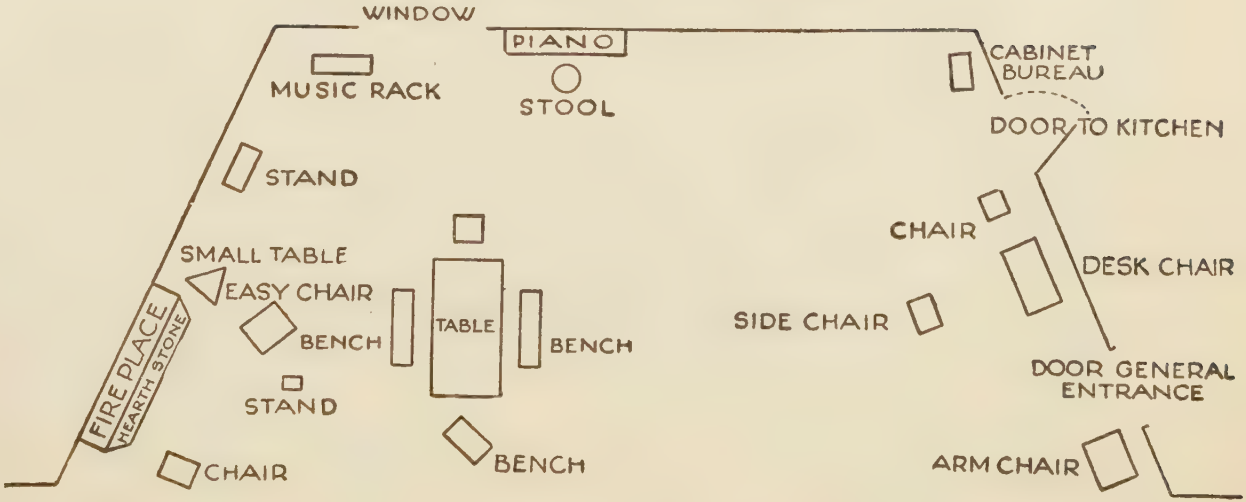


ACTS II AND III.

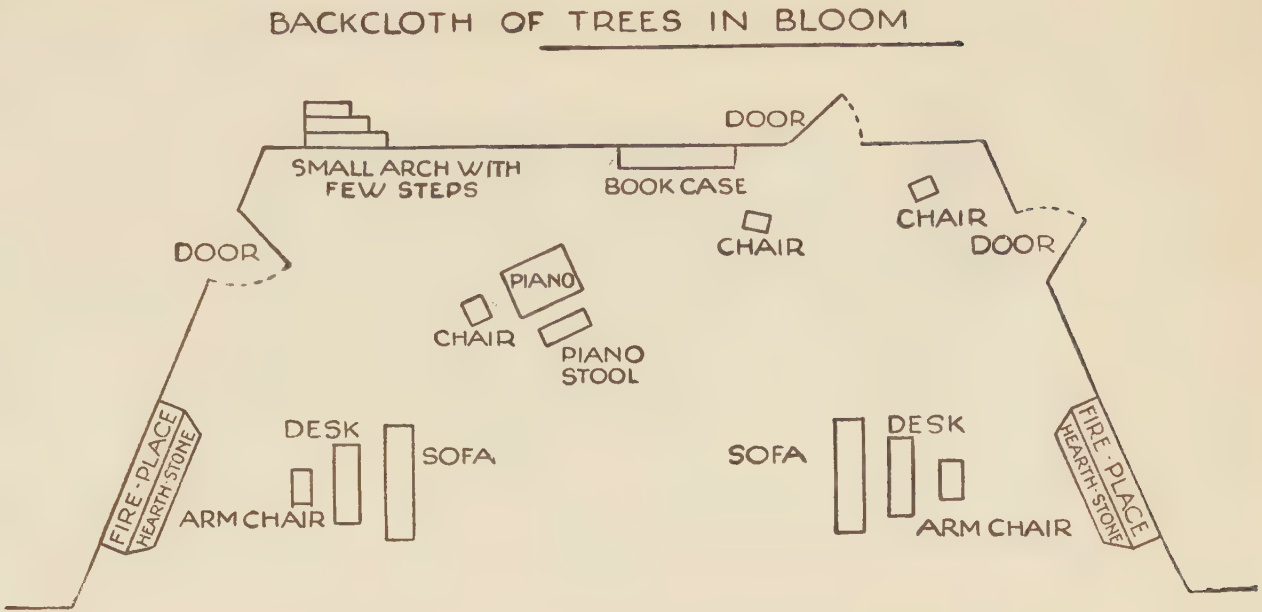
KEY.

1. Sofa.
2. Desk.
3. Desk chair.
4. Armchair.
5. Fender and fireirons
6. Fireplace.
7. Flower bowl.
8. Post.
9. Piano.
10. Piano bench.
11. Chair.
12. Small chair.
13. Bureau.
14. Consules.

A Simplified Form of Setting for ACT I.



A Simplified Form of Setting for ACTS II and III.



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